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GROWING TOMORROW'S LEADERS IN TODAY'S
ENVIRONMENT

by

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Abstract

Identifying and developing future leaders is the ultimate goal of officer professional development. Over the past decade, two new laws and three major policy changes implemented by senior Air Force leaders have altered the traditional career path for developing young rated officers into future Air Force leaders. The two legislative changes are the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Aviation Career Improvement Act of 1989. The three policy changes include the Air Force restructure that occurred in 1991, two major revisions to the officer assignment system, and the implementation of a Command Screening Board in 1996. These changes have resulted in a new career path.

This paper will examine the shortcomings of the current leadership development model, the impact this model is having on the officer force, and recommendations for improving officer professional development. The author will argue that the relative importance placed on early promotion has increased while the emphasis placed on operational credibility has declined as a result of the officer professional development path being used today to grow tomorrow's leaders.

Chapter 1

Setting the Stage

Introduction

Leadership development has always been a critical issue in the military. Within the Air Force, senior leadership philosophy guides officer professional development (OPD). Ideally, an officer who reaches senior leadership positions will have the requisite balance of field and staff experience.

The preponderance of the Air Force's colonel and general officer force has historically been comprised of rated officers. Although certain similarities apply to the entire officer force, there are also significant differences in the career paths of rated officers (pilots and navigators) as compared to support officers.

The scope of this paper will be limited to an examination of executive development of the rated officer force. Several new statutory requirements and Air Force policy changes have been implemented over the past decade that have altered the traditional leadership development path for the rated officer force. Many of the issues discussed also apply to support officers, but the most dramatic changes in OPD have occurred in the rated officer force.

While there is theoretically no set path to general officer and senior leadership positions, there are certain critical steps an officer must complete in order to remain

competitive. Young rated officers must gain a wide variety of operational, command, and staff experience in a finite amount of time to prepare them for the challenges they will face as senior Air Force leaders. The unique complexities of today's modern weapon systems also require a thorough base of operational expertise that can only be acquired through experience gained in the cockpit. As rated officers move up in seniority, a natural tension develops between the requirement to maintain operational credibility and the need to broaden one's scope through key staff assignments and professional military education.

For the purposes of this paper, the term "executive development window" will be used to describe the timeframe beginning when a rated officer can first leave the cockpit and ending when he/she reaches the normal promotion window for brigadier general (BG). This promotion window will be defined in the next chapter. The executive development window is period of time when an officer builds the staff, educational, and command experience in preparation for senior leadership positions. It is also the time to maintain operational credibility by further refining flying skills and developing/applying the leadership skills needed to command flying organizations.

Over the past decade, several changes have occurred that complicated rated OPD. Some of the changes have shortened the executive development window while others changes have added additional requirements that compete for the finite amount of time in an officer's career.

The author will argue that the relative importance placed on early promotion has increased while the emphasis placed on operational credibility has declined as a result of the OPD path being used today to grow tomorrow's leaders. The competition for time

has resulted in policy changes (written and unwritten) that have significantly narrowed the pool of officers competitive for senior leadership positions. This division of the officer corps and lack of emphasis on operational credibility may have contributed to a resurgence of careerism in the Air Force.

Overview

In the following chapters, the author will describe the changes that have occurred in OPD and explain how these changes have resulted in a shift in the relative priority of the quality indicators used to identify future leaders. The discussion will begin with an examination of senior officer management in Chapter 2. This will build a foundation for understanding the time constraints on the upper end of the executive development window; it will also explain the rationale behind the emphasis currently placed on the importance of early promotion in the development of senior Air Force leaders.

Chapter 3 will examine the OPD path that existed until the end of the 1980s. This path will be referred to as the traditional leadership development model. Most of today's three- and four-star generals were the product of this system.

Chapter 4 will introduce two key legislative and three policy changes that occurred between 1986 and 1996. These changes altered the executive development landscape and ultimately resulted in significant changes to the traditional leadership development model described in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 will discuss the impact of these five changes on the executive development landscape.

Chapter 6 describes the leadership development model being used today to grow tomorrow's rated leaders. This chapter will describe the path in terms of operational, staff, educational, and command assignments as well as the quality indicators currently

used to identify future Air Force leaders—command experience, completion of a joint duty assignment (JDA), the requisite Pentagon tour, in-residence attendance at Intermediate Service School/Senior Service School (ISS/SSS), and selection for early promotion.

The next two chapters will address the author's analysis of the current leadership development model. Chapter 7 will present several shortcomings of the current system and will argue that it fails to adequately emphasize operational credibility as a consideration in identifying future leaders. Chapter 8 will address several options for restoring operational credibility as a priority in the development of tomorrow's leaders with particular emphasis on developing competitive officers with both the breadth and depth to provide credible combat leadership. The last chapter leaves the reader with some final thoughts and conclusions.

Chapter 2

Senior Officer Management

Only a select few officers will eventually be promoted beyond the rank of colonel. According to the Air Force Personnel Center's (AFPC) most recent guide on Officer Career Paths, only 1 out of every 263 line officers commissioned will attain the rank of BG.¹ Although the number of promotions to the general officer ranks is extremely low, the dynamics of the general officer force play a major role in the OPD priorities for company and field grade officers.

When an officer is promoted to the grade of colonel, a new factor enters the equation that plays a major role in future promotion potential—the factor of time. The general officer force is constrained by a different set of dynamics detailed in public law that limits both the makeup and tenure of the general officer force. Tenure is controlled through legally constrained mandatory retirement dates (MRDs) spelled out in Title 10, of the United States Code (USC Title X).

Although all four branches of service are constrained by the same laws, how each individual Service deal with these constraints is a matter of individual Service policy.

The later an officer is promoted to BG, the less amount of time that officer has before reaching the MRD. Time also affects the number of years an officer will be able to spend in the general officer force and impacts the ultimate promotion potential of the officer.

An officer who is selected for BG later in his/her career will simply run out of time to compete for the most senior flag officer promotions. The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) of 1981 established the current promotion phase points. DOPMA, now incorporated into USC Title X and in Department of Defense directives.

In addition to establishing promotion phase points, DOPMA also sets minimum time in grade (TIG) requirements before an officer is eligible for promotion to the next grade. For promotion to major, lieutenant colonel, or colonel an officer must have a minimum of three years TIG at the preceding rank.²

One way of dealing with the factor of time is to accelerate the promotion of some officers. Under the provisions of Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 1320.12, the services may also accelerate the promotions of a some majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels subject to the maximum restrictions indicated below:

“...the number of officers on the Active Duty List who may be recommended for promotion to the grades of O-4 through O-6, from among those being considered from below the promotion zone in any competitive category, may not exceed 10 percent of the maximum number of officers to be recommended for promotion in such competitive category. If the Secretary of the Military Department concerned determines the needs of the Military Service concerned require additional recommendations from below the promotion zone, he or she may, with the approval of the Secretary of Defense, provide for the recommendation of a greater number. In that case, the number of officers selected may not exceed 15 percent of the total number of the officers that the selection board is authorized to recommend for promotion.”³

How each Service applies this provision within the constraints of the law is a matter of choice. Air Force policy currently permits officers to be promoted up to two years early to major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel—an aggregate total of six years.⁴

Early promotion reallocates time—it borrows time from the earlier phases of one’s career thereby lengthening the time available in the latter phases. Strictly from the view

of time, earlier is better. In theory, this could allow up to six more years in the general officer ranks for those selected as early as possible.

To better understand the emphasis placed on early promotion, it is necessary to examine the dynamics driving the management of the Air Force general officer force. The general officer force is governed by two primary constraints—authorizations and MRDs. These constraints play key role in promotion timing for BG selection, which in turn affects the management of the entire officer force.

General Officer Authorizations

The size and makeup of the general officer population is strictly governed by USC Title X. The Air Force is currently authorized a baseline of 279 general officers. USC Title X also provides an additional 12 general officer billets above and beyond the individual service authorizations for utilization in meeting joint requirements. At present, the USAF is authorized a total of 282 general officers.⁵

In addition to specifying the total number of general officers authorized by service, USC Title X also delineates the exact breakdown of the general officer force by grade authorizations. Grade distribution is determined by the following three requirements:

1. Half of the general officer force must serve in the grade of O-7.
2. No more than 15 percent of the general officer force may serve in the grades of O-9 and O-10.
3. No more than 25 percent of the general officers above the grade of O-8 may serve in the grade of O-10.⁶

Applying the grade limitations specified above, the current USAF distribution by grade is as shown below in Figure 1:

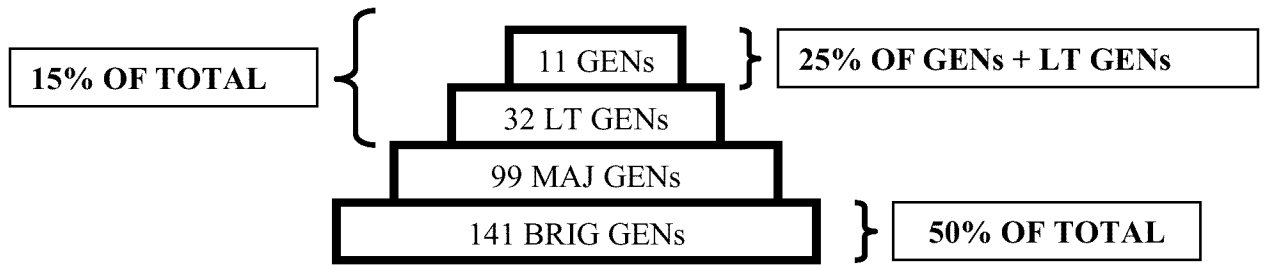


Figure 1. General Officer Grade Distribution

Mandatory Retirement Dates

USC Title X also defines MRDs for all officers. These dates are generally based on years of total active federal commissioned service (TAFCS) for most officers. Colonels are limited to a maximum of 30 years of TAFCS. General officer retirements are based on a combination of TIG, TAFCS, age, and specific grade.

The MRD for BGs is 5 years TIG or 30 years of TAFCS, whichever is later.⁷ Major generals are required to retire upon reaching 5 years TIG or 35 years of TAFCS, whichever is later.⁸ MRDs for lieutenant general/vice admiral (O-9) and general/admiral (O-10) is based upon 35 years TAFCS. All general officers are required to retire at a maximum age of 62, unless a waiver is obtained.⁹ This is usually not an issue since most general officers will reach other constraints first. The figure below reflects the normal drivers for MRD.

GEN	35 YRS TAFCS
LT GEN	35 YRS TAFCS
MAJ GEN	LATER OF 35 YRS TAFCS OR 5 YRS TIG
BRIG GEN	LATER OF 30 YRS TAFCS OR 5YRS TIG

Figure 2. General Officer Mandatory Retirement Dates (MRDs)

The last promotion board an officer meets is for major general. For progression above the grade of major general, the President may appoint officers to specific lieutenant general/vice admiral and general/admiral vacancies on a temporary basis. USC Title X authorizes the President to “designate positions of importance and responsibility to carry the grade of general or admiral or lieutenant general or vice admiral”¹⁰ and to appoint officers to those vacancies. Three- and four-star generals are therefore permanent major generals with temporary appointments to higher grades. Upon retirement, the President must nominate three- and four-star generals for retirement in a grade above major general.

Sustaining the Force

At the top end of the spectrum, the general officer force is constrained by the 35 year MRDs for three- and four-star generals. As discussed above, general officers are promoted and assigned to vacancies. Vacancies at the four-star level are generated by retirements. Three-star, two-star, and one-star vacancies are generated by a combination of retirements and promotions. Retirements and promotions generate turnover in the general officer force and ultimately results in the opportunity for colonels to be promoted to BG. Without MRDs, promotion opportunity could potentially stagnate.

Promotion Timing for Brigadier General

The timing for promotion to BG is determined by Air Force policy. DOPMA requires officers to have a minimum of one year TIG as a colonel before being eligible for promotion to BG; however, Service policies may be more restrictive. “Air Force

policy requires that to be considered for promotion to brigadier general, an officer must have at least 2 years time in grade as of the board convening date.”¹¹

As mentioned earlier, the MRD for BGs occurs at the later of 5 years TIG or 30 years TAFCS. When colonels are promoted to BG later than the 25th year of TAFCS, 5 years TIG will become the driver for MRD resulting in tenure beyond 30 years of TAFCS. It is, therefore, not surprising that very few officers are promoted to BG later than their 25th year of TAFCS.

The later an officer is promoted to BG, the less likely he/she is to be able to attain the rank of O-9 or O-10 due to the 35 year MRD for those grades. Conversely, the earlier an officer is promoted to BG the more time he/she will have to advance to the more senior ranks before reaching the 35 year TAFCS constraint.

According to the Air Force Colonel Matters Office (AF/DPO), the average BG is selected for promotion with 24 years TIS and 5 years TIG as a colonel.¹² A careful review of past BG promotion lists will show that about 80% are chosen for promotion between 23 and 25 years of TAFCS. In order to be promoted to BG at the 24th year of service with 5 years TIG as a colonel, an officer would have to pin on colonel during the 19th year—3 years ahead of contemporaries. AF/DPO statistics confirm the average BG-select has been promoted to colonel an aggregate of 3 years early.¹³

This BG promotion window plays a major role in Air Force OPD philosophy. It drives the need to develop a pool of colonels who have been promoted an average of 3 years early while also having obtained the necessary operational, staff, educational, and command experience to qualify them for promotion to the general officer ranks.

Emphasis on Early Promotion to Colonel

The priority placed on early promotion in the Air Force is directly tied to this policy. The word “policy” is important and should not be confused with the legal constraints of USC Title X. By law, an officer could theoretically be selected for promotion to BG as late as the 29th year of commissioned service. This would result in pinning on the first star around the 30th year and would still allow him/her to serve for 5 years in grade prior to MRD. Even in this scenario, the officer might have sufficient time to earn a second star since the MRD for major general is based on the later of 35 years TAFCS or 5 years TIG (assuming age 62 is not a factor). The down side of this scenario is that it would significantly reduce the size of the pool of contenders for a third or fourth star since their MRDs are capped at 35 years TAFCS.

By promoting the vast majority of officers to BG at or before the 25th year, the Air Force also limits the tenure of most BGs to 30 years of TAFCS. At the same time, this policy creates a larger pool of officers from which to choose two-, three-, and four-stars.

A careful review of current general officer biographies shows that most lieutenant generals and generals were selected for promotion to BG earlier than the 23rd year. Those few officers promoted later than the 25th year of service frequently retire as BGs.

The “Trickle-Down Effect”

The current BG promotion window places a high premium on below the promotion zone (BPZ) promotion. Although a very small pool of officers will ever attain the rank of BG, the emphasis on early promotion impacts OPD for the entire officer corps.

To produce a sufficiently large pool from which to chose BGs, the Air Force must grow a pool of colonels with the proper experience who have been promoted an average

of 3 years ahead of their contemporaries. This goal drives a variety other personnel policies such as selection criteria for squadron commander, ISS/SSS, and certain staff tours. It also compresses the time available for obtaining the necessary operational, staff, educational, and command experience that frequently requires tradeoffs in some areas. These tradeoffs will be discussed in later chapters.

Notes

¹ Air Force Personnel Center, "Officer Career Paths Guide," n. p.; on-line, Internet, 13 December 1997, available from <http://www.afpc.af.mil/assignments/htdocs/>.

² Ibid, p. 5.

³ Department of Defense Directive 1320.12, *Commissioned Officer Promotion Program*, 30 October 1996, p. 2.

⁴ Air Force Pamphlet 36-2506, *You and Your Promotions—The Air Force Officer Promotion Program*, 1 September 1997, p. 5.

⁵ United States Code, *Title 10—Armed Forces*, (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1995), Section 526.

⁶ Ibid, Section 525.

⁷ Ibid, Section 635.

⁸ Ibid, Section 636.

⁹ Ibid, Section 1251.

¹⁰ Ibid, Section 601.

¹¹ Air Force Instruction 36-2501, *Officer Promotions and Selective Continuation*, 1 March 1996, p. 33.

¹² Col Paul Hankins, Chief, Air Force Colonel Matters Office (AF/DPO), briefing on "Colonels' Issues." Air War College, 13 November 1997.

¹³ Ibid.

Chapter 3

The Traditional Leadership Development Model

This chapter examines the traditional leadership development path, or model, that characterized OPD until the late 1980s. Although this model was not carved in stone, the basic path for rated OPD was clearly spelled out in Air Force Regulation (AFR) 36-23, Officer Professional Development.

The pattern of rated officer executive development was driven in large part by a rated management system known as the “gate” concept. The Aviation Career Incentive Act of 1974 established a direct link between flight pay and the number of years spent in the cockpit. This law recognized the need for rated officers achieve a balance of experience in cockpit duties while also permitting time out of the cockpit in order to receive the appropriate amount of education and staff experience. If an officer failed to meet the minimum number of years in the cockpit, flight pay ceased. Under the Aviation Career Incentive Act of 1974, the following three gates were defined:

First Gate: As long as a rated officer completed 6 years of aviation service during the first 12 years, flight pay would continue until the 18th year of aviation service.

Second Gate: If an officer completed 9 years of aviation service during the first 18 years, flight pay would continue until the 22nd year of commissioned service.

Third Gate: If an officer completed 11 years of aviation service during the first 18 years, flight pay would continue until the 25th year of commissioned service.¹

Personnel officers typically managed the rated force to ensure completion of the second gate. In other words, 9 of the first 18 years had to be spent in the cockpit. Under this gate system, rated officers could begin to broaden into non-rated career fields or complete staff tours as soon as they had completed their first gate (6 years of aviation service). The only time constraint was the requirement to return to the cockpit in time to complete 3 more years of flying duties prior to the end of the 18th year of service to ensure completion of the second gate—9 of the first 18 years.

The 1985 version of AFR 36-23 identified five phases of OPD. Each phase was characterized by certain types of assignments, education, and experience deemed necessary to prepare the officer for the next phases of his/her career.

The Initial Phase covered the first five years of an officer's career. For rated officers, the first year of service normally consisted of completing Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) or Undergraduate Navigator Training (UNT). The primary focus of this phase was to establish the flying skills and increase flying experiences at the unit level. The end of the initial phase coincided with completion of the first flying gate.²

The next phase, known as the Intermediate Development Phase, began with the sixth year of service and continued through end of the 11th year of service. During this phase, officers were expected to focus on refining their flying and leadership skills. It also marked the first opportunity for rated officers to broaden by gaining experience outside of the cockpit. Some officers received the opportunity to complete a tour in a related field such as aircraft maintenance through a formal program known as the rated supplement. Others were assigned to major command (MAJCOM) or numbered air force (NAF) staff positions to gain early staff experience. Toward the end of this phase,

officers competed for promotion to major and some officers were selected for ISS in-residence.³

The Advanced Development Phase (12-17 years) provided “officers with the most significant advances in growth and development.”⁴ During this phase, officers began to make the transition from line into staff and command positions. This was the time where many officers completed a MAJCOM or higher-level staff tour. Officers also met their primary and secondary zone promotion boards for lieutenant colonel during this phase. Toward the end of the Advanced Development Phase, the most competitive rated officers usually served as operations officers and/or squadron commanders.⁵

The Staff Phase usually began around the 18th year of service and continued through the 22nd year. Some officers completed tours as squadron commanders during the earlier portion of this phase. Many others would typically serve on MAJCOM staffs or at the Pentagon on the Air Staff. During this phase, the most competitive officers would also attend SSS in-residence. Primary and secondary zone promotion consideration for colonel also occurred during the Staff Phase.⁶

The most competitive officers then entered the Executive Phase. This phase was defined as beginning around the 23rd year of service. Pinned on colonels continued their executive development by completing key staff and command tours before consideration for promotion to BG.⁷

Competitive rated colonels usually returned to wing level leadership positions where they served as deputy commander for operations (Wg/DO) and/or vice wing commander (Wg/CV). Some officers who had completed tours as flying squadron commanders proceeded directly to Wg/CV billets while most re-entered the wing

leadership as Wg/DOs. Upon successful completion of a Wg/DO or Wg/CV tour, a select few became wing commanders (Wg/CCs). Some Wg/CCs would also complete a second Wg/CC tour in a different wing. The amount of time spent as a Wg/CC (all in one wing or divided among two different wings) was typically two years. Almost without exception, rated BG selects were chosen from the pool of incumbent or graduated Wg/CCs.

By overlaying the element of time, a typical leadership development pattern can be described in terms of the executive development window. While the sequence may vary, this exercise still aids in quantifying the amount of time typically required to obtain the desired amount of operational, staff, educational, and command experience described by AFR 36-23. The figure below shows the normal progression:

Wg/CC	2 years
Wg/CV and/or Wg/DO	1-2 years
MAJCOM, Air Staff, or Joint Tour	2-3 years
Senior Service School	1 year
Squadron Commander	2 years
Squadron Operations Officer	1 year
Initial Staff Tour (MAJCOM or NAF)	2-3 years
Intermediate Service School	1 year
Total	12-15 years

Figure 3. Traditional Leadership Development Model

In terms of professional development, the “executive development window” in this model can be defined as the period between completion of the first gate and the beginning of the normal promotion window for brigadier general. In the preceding chapter, the typical promotion window for BG selection was defined as 23-25 years of TAFCS. Therefore, the executive development window under the traditional leadership

development model can be described as the period between the beginning of the 7th and the end of the 22nd year of TAFCS—a period of 16 years.

Under the constraints of the Aviation Career Incentive Act of 1974, an officer could leave the cockpit as early as the beginning of the seventh year (completion of the first gate) as long as he/she completed three more years in the cockpit prior to the end of the 18th year of aviation service. A 16-year executive development window provided ample time for competitive officers to complete the 12-15 years of key operational, staff, educational, and command assignments described above while still meeting the gate requirements detailed in the Aviation Career Incentive Act of 1974. Even those officers selected early for promotion to major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel generally had sufficient time to acquire the appropriate experience to adequately prepare them for senior leadership positions.

Notes

¹ Air Force Regulation (AFR) 36-23, *Officer Career Development*, 11 March 1985, p. 11.

² Ibid, p. 43.

³ Ibid, pp. 43-44.

⁴ Ibid, p. 44.

⁵ Ibid, p. 44.

⁶ Ibid, p. 44.

⁷ Ibid, p. 44.

Chapter 4

Major Changes in the Executive Development Landscape

The decade beginning in 1986 and ending in 1996 was characterized by a series of changes that transformed OPD in the Air Force. Each of these initiatives will be discussed in this chapter. The next chapter will describe how these changes have impacted OPD.

Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986

In 1986, President Reagan signed the DoD Reorganization Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-433) into law marking what is arguably the most dramatic and comprehensive changes since the Air Force was formed in 1947. The passage of this law (also known as the Goldwater-Nichols Act) was sparked by Congressional concerns over “excessive power and influence on the part of the separate Services.”¹

Two key studies, the Kerwin Study and the Packard Commission, served as the primary inputs for the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Both studies called for broad reforms to reorganize the DoD and strengthen civil control of the military. Both studies also recommended initiatives to improve the quality of officers serving in joint positions.² The following sections will focus on this final objective.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act consisted of six sections, also known as titles. Title IV established specific joint officer management procedures. Title IV’s requirements can be

broken into three categories: establishment of joint positions, creation of a cadre of officers with joint education and experience, and links between officer promotion and joint experience.

Joint Positions

Title IV required the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) to define the term “joint duty assignment (JDA).” It further required him to publish a list of joint positions in which officers could serve to gain joint experience. Title IV also required designation of at least 1,000 JDA billets as critical.³

In response to these requirements, the SECDEF created the Joint Duty Assignment List (JDAL). Over the years, the JDAL has been modified as new requirements have been identified and other requirements have been eliminated. The most recent JDAL was published on 17 October 1997. The current JDAL contains 9,483 joint billets divided among the services. The Air Force has the greatest share of the JDAL with a total of 3,591 billets, or 38 percent of the total requirements.⁴

Joint Specialty Officers

Title IV also created the concept of a joint specialty officer (JSO). According to JCS Admin Pub 1.2, a JSO is defined as follows:

“An officer designated as a Joint Specialty Officer by the Secretary of Defense, who is educated and experienced in the employment, deployment, and support of unified and combined forces to achieve national security objectives.”⁵

In order to become a JSO, an officer must complete two phases of joint professional military education (JPME). The first phase is accomplished by completing one of the Service’s Intermediate or Senior Service Schools either in-residence or by

correspondence/seminar. Phase II JPME consists of a 12-week course conducted at the Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk, Virginia.

In addition to the Phase I and II JPME requirements, officers must then complete a JDA in one of the positions listed on the JDAL. In order to receive credit for a JDA, officers must serve the full tour length—normally 36 months. Upon completion of the appropriate JPME and a JDA, an officer becomes a JSO-nominee. Under most circumstances, officers must complete Phase I JPME, Phase II JPME, and the JDA in that sequence. One important exception will be discussed in the next section.

Each year, respective Services hold JSO designation boards to select JSOs from the JSO-nominees. The significance of JSO designation is primarily tied to qualification to fill joint critical positions. Only those officers designated as JSOs can fill the 1,000 joint critical positions on the JDAL.

Many officers may serve in joint duty positions and thereby receive credit for a JDA; only those officers who complete both the JPME and JDA requirements and who are designated by the SECDEF become JSOs.

Critical Occupational Specialty Officers

Title IV recognized certain combat specialties had to be maintained within the Services and joint duty could potentially result in a degradation of individual warfighting skills or a shortage of certain combat skills within the Services. To address this issue, Title IV created the Critical Occupational Specialty (COS) as defined below:

“A military occupational specialty selected from among the combat arms in the Army or equivalent military specialties in the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. Equivalent military specialties are those engaged in the operational art to attain strategic goals in a theater of conflict through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations.”⁶

In order to balance the needs of the Services against the needs of the joint arena, COS officers are permitted to receive full JDA credit following completion of 24 months in a JDAL billet. Within the Air Force, COS officers are defined as pilots, navigators, and non-rated operations officers. COS officers are also allowed to be designated as JSO-nominees and complete for JSO designation even if the JPME and JDA are completed out of sequence.

An officer possessing a COS can be extracted from a JDA early in order to meet operational requirements. This does not give the Services blanket approval to curtail JDAs for these officers. Officers can be pulled early to fill specific requirements such as commander or operations officer billets. The total number of COS tour curtailments is limited to 12.5 percent of the JDAL billets and is pro-rated among the Services based on the numbers of billets they have on the JDAL. For FY98, the Air Force is limited to a maximum of 442 COS tour curtailments.⁷

Promotion Requirements and Comparisons

To guarantee the Services improved the quality of officers assigned to joint positions, Congress established direct links between joint duty and the officer promotion system. From a Congressional point-of-view, these links provided teeth to the requirements contained in Title IV. These links were incorporated as Sections 619 and 662 of USC Title X.

Section 619 established the requirements for completion of a joint duty assignment as a prerequisite for promotion to O-7.⁸ As a result of this requirement, an O-7 candidate must complete a JDA while serving as a field grade officer. This significantly complicates the executive development process as will be demonstrated in the next

chapter. It is important to note there is no requirement for an officer to be designated as a JSO in order to compete for promotion to O-7; the only requirement is that the officer completes a JDA.

Section 662 established direct comparisons between promotion rates of officers with joint experience and those without joint experience. In other words, Congress elected to use promotion rates as a measure of quality.

These promotion comparisons force the Services to track, compare, and report promotion rates for officers selected for O-4 through O-6. Comparisons are drawn for each promotion zone—BPZ, in the promotion zone (IPZ), and above the promotion zone (APZ). In plain language, the law measures quality by promotion rates and establishes 12 comparisons based on the following four requirements for each promotion zone:

1. Officers currently serving on the Joint Staff must be promoted at a rate equal to or higher than officers serving on the Air Staff.
2. Officers who have ever served on the Joint Staff must be promoted at a rate equal to or higher than officers who have ever served on the Air Staff.
3. Officers who are JSOs must be promoted at a rate equal to or higher than officers who currently are serving on the Air Staff or have ever completed an Air Staff tour.
4. Non-JSO officers currently serving in joint tours other than on the Joint Staff must be promoted at a rate equal to or higher than the overall selection rates for all officers meeting the same board.⁹

The Aviation Career Improvement Act of 1989

As a result of declining pilot retention in the late 1980s, the military services (primarily led by the Air Force) began to request increased compensation for pilots. Two specific forms of compensation were proposed: an increase in Aviation Career Incentive Pay (ACIP) and establishment of a \$12,000/year pilot bonus known as Aviator Continuation Pay (ACP). In 1989, Congress only included the pilot bonus as part of the 1989 Defense Authorization Act.

Senator John Glenn then introduced legislation in 1989 to increase ACIP, also known as flight pay, for all rated officers. This legislation, known as the Aviation Career Improvement Act of 1989, modified the gate structure that had been in place since 1974.¹⁰ The purpose of the revised gate structure was to keep rated officers in the cockpit longer to help address the pilot shortage. Senator Glenn's legislation was incorporated in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1990-1991 with an effective date of 1 October 1991. The new gates established are described below:

First Gate: In order to continue receiving flight pay until the 18th year of service, a rated officer must complete 9 years of aviation service during the first 12 years.

Second Gate: In order to receive flight pay until the 22nd year of commissioned service, a rated officer must complete 10 years of aviation service during the first 18 years.

Third Gate: In order to receive flight pay until the 25th year of commissioned service, a rated officer must complete 12 years of aviation service during the first 18 years.¹¹

Air Force Restructure

Starting in 1989, DoD began a major effort to downsize the defense structure in response to declining public support for a defense budget largely based on a Cold War threat. In an effort to get out ahead of Congressional and public pressures, General Merrill A. McPeak, Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), began an aggressive effort to restructure the Air Force. According to him, "I have absolutely no intention of presiding over the decline of the Air Force. Therefore, we will instead press for a top-to-bottom restructure as the best way to sustain our combat capability as we get smaller."¹²

General McPeak's initiatives resulted in unprecedented changes in a very short period of time. These initiatives were first captured in a White Paper entitled Air Force

Restructure released in September 1991. The top-down initiatives included reductions in headquarters, reorganizations of the major commands, elimination of air divisions, and restructuring Air Force wings. While each of these initiatives had far-reaching effects, this paper will focus on those that affected the executive development landscape.

Redistribution of the General Officer Force

One of the drivers for General McPeak's restructuring efforts was a Congressionally directed reduction in the Air Force general officer force from 338 authorizations to 279 authorizations.¹³ According to General McPeak, "Congress has directed that we must cut 59 generals out of our hide by 1995, so much head scratching will be needed just to keep pace with this mandated drawdown."¹⁴ General McPeak's objective was to move general officers out of the headquarters and back into the field.

In order to meet this reduction, General McPeak directed numerous changes in the utilization of general officers. He reduced the number of general officers assigned to the Air Staff from 58 to 43. MAJCOMs were directed to eliminate one-star deputies from their staffs, dropping their general officer requirements from 64 to 40. All numbered air force general officer vice commanders were eliminated, reducing their requirements from 59 to 34. The final major cut consisted of eliminating an entire organizational level—the Air Division. This initiative eliminated 19 general officer requirements.¹⁵

"For years, many of our wing-manning documents called for general-officer commanders, but we've manned them with colonels—promotable colonels. The idea now is to actually put generals at wing level."¹⁶ As a guideline, BGs would command wings at Air Force bases with 4,000 or more personnel.¹⁷

Implementation of the Objective Wing Structure

The second major change at the wing level was the CSAF-directed implementation of the objective wing structure. At the heart of this initiative was the principle of “One Base, One Wing, One Boss.”¹⁸ Instead of having a Wg/CC with a subordinate base commander, the Wg/CC would now become the overall installation commander. The traditional tri-deputy structure consisting of a deputy commanders for operations (Wg/DO), maintenance (Wg/DCM), and resource management (Wg/RM) would undergo a fundamental change. General McPeak directed realignment of these three organizations into two groups—the operations group (OG) and the logistics group. He also redesignated the base commander and the hospital commander as the support group commander and medical group commanders, respectively. The officers heading these new groups would now be commanders instead of deputies.

Under General McPeak’s vision, commanders would now work for commanders and the chain of command would be strengthened. General McPeak’s view of the group commander’s role can be summed up as follows: “The ops group commander envisioned is a warrior all the way. ‘He’s not a staff officer, he’s a commander, a walking-around leader who doesn’t have to sit in his office supervising staff activities,’ McPeak explains.”¹⁹

Changes in the Officer Assignment System

Shortly after becoming the CSAF, General McPeak also decided to make dramatic changes to the officer assignment system. Partly in response to declining pilot retention, he decided to implement an officer assignment system based on the premise that there would be a volunteer for every position.

Historically, the officer assignment system had been driven by Air Force personnel requirements. Commanders, resource managers at the personnel center, and the individual officer jointly managed OPD. According to a senior personnel officer at the Air Force Military Personnel Center (AFMPC), the “guiding philosophy had been to groom every officer to become chief of staff of the Air Force...all officers were required to pass through various ‘wickets’ to gain ‘breadth and depth’ of experience.”²⁰ This philosophy changed in April 1991.

At General McPeak’s direction, AFMPC created the Officer Volunteer Assignment System (OVAS). Under this new system, all officer requirements (known as vacancies) would be advertised on an electronic bulletin board. Officers would volunteer for those assignments they wanted. In theory, if no one volunteered for a specific vacancy the position would remain vacant.

Under this new system, officers at desirable locations began to homestead since they were very pleased with their assignments while units at less desirable locations began to see significant undermanning. To solve this dilemma, AFMPC exempted officers with 15 or more years of service from the non-volunteer provisions of OVAS. If a volunteer could not fill a billet, a non-volunteer would be selected from those officers with 15 or more years of service. The rationale for this decision was that these officers would be less likely to separate in lieu of assignment since they were within 5 years of retirement.²¹

Many people considered OVAS flawed from beginning. Non-volunteer assignments began to be filled with field grade officers, even if the requirement was for a company grade officer. Officers who had been passed over for promotion and company grade officers with prior enlisted experience were frequently targeted as non-volunteers for

hard-to-fill billets while nearly all other company grade officers were protected from involuntary reassignment.²²

Within weeks of General McPeak's retirement, changes were made to the OVAS. The new CSAF, General Ronald Fogleman, restructured the assignment system again in early 1995. Recognizing that the system focused only on individual officer desires while neglecting Air Force needs, General Fogleman eliminated a key provision of OVAS—the exemption of officers with less than 15 years of service from involuntary reassignment. The word “volunteer” was deleted and the new system became known as the Officer Assignment System (OAS). General Fogleman's guiding principle was to restore “service before self” as a core value in the Air Force.²³

Under OAS, assignments were still advertised and officers could still volunteer for vacancies. If no one volunteered for hard-to-fill vacancies, the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC--formerly known as AFPMC) would select non-volunteers to fill vacancies.

Establishment of the Command Screening Board

The process for selecting wing and group commanders underwent a significant change in early 1996. Traditionally, MAJCOM commanders selected their subordinate wing and group commanders. Each MAJCOM commander established procedures for selecting these commanders, usually consisting of a board of general officers who screened the records of potential candidates. Critics of this system argued it tended to favor pilots since most MAJCOM commanders were pilots. They also argued it “favored people who were known to the heads of the commands.”²⁴

During General Fogleman's tenure as CSAF, he decided to centralize the selection process for wing and group commanders. At his direction, a Command Screening Board (CSB) was established. The first CSB convened on 16 January 1996. Under the new CSB process, the records of all eligible colonels and colonel (selects) were screened. The end product was a list of wing and group commanders broken down by category such as mobility wing, fighter wing, support group, fighter operations group, etc.²⁵

Although the CSB centralized the selection process, MAJCOM commanders still retained a certain degree of control. The CSB list serves as a shopping list from which MAJCOM commanders select officers, build a game plan, and submit their list to the Air Force Colonels' Group for final approval by the CSAF.

To date, there have now been three CSBs. The boards typically select 1.3 candidates for each projected vacancy for each type of wing and group. The process is extremely competitive. According to Air Force Colonel Matters Office, approximately 2 percent of the colonel force will command a wing and approximately 10 percent will command a group.²⁶

Notes

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⁹ *Ibid*, Section 662.

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¹¹ Air Force Instruction (AFI) 11-401, *Flight Management*, 1 March 1996, p. 11.

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²³ Bruce D. Callander, “The New Way of Officer Assignments,” *Air Force Magazine*, September 1995, p. 90.

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Chapter 5

Impact of Changes to the Executive Development Landscape

Each of the changes described in Chapter 4 impacted OPD as described by the traditional leadership development model in Chapter 3. This chapter details how these changes affected the executive development window and will serve as a precursor to the discussion of a new leadership development model to be discussed in the next chapter.

Impact of the 1989 Aviation Career Improvement Act

It is important to discuss the Aviation Career Improvement Act of 1989 before addressing the impact of Goldwater-Nichols. As a result of changes in gate requirements, rated officers are now required to remain in the cockpit longer during the earlier phases of their careers. Prior to this change, OPD opportunities outside the cockpit could begin after completion of the first gate—at the beginning of the 7th year of aviation service.

By adding three years to the first gate and one year to the second gate, the tendency is to keep officers in the cockpit until they have completed their second gate. This is spelled out in AFPC personnel directives:

“The 1989 Act provides limited opportunities for officers to leave operational flight duties prior to reaching 9 years of aviation service. In most instances, AFPC personnel will be reluctant to allow diversification into a nonflying billet until the 10th year (2^d gate complete). If for some reason an individual does choose to leave flying duties prior to completing a gate, they will do so at their own risk.”¹

The new gate structure front-loads rated officer experience and virtually eliminates the opportunity for early career broadening opportunities prior to completion of 10 years of service in the cockpit. Officers typically leave the cockpit approximately the same time they enter the primary zone for major

The new executive development window can be defined as the time between the beginning of the completion of the second gate (beginning of the 11th year) and the end of the 22nd year of service—a period of 12 years. Therefore, the executive development window has been reduced by four years as a result of this legislation.

Impact of DoD Reorganization Act of 1986

Goldwater-Nichols provided many needed changes to DoD. By linking Title IV to the officer promotion system, Congress ensured fundamental changes in the Services' views regarding the relative importance of joint duty in OPD.

“It is the connection that Title IV draws between selection for promotion and quality (at the field grade and general officer levels), and the expanding application of that connection, that are causing us to drastically alter traditional officer career management patterns.”²

From an OPD point of view, a JDA is now a prerequisite for BG promotion. However, the limited size of the JDAL ensures that only a portion of the officer corps will be afforded the opportunity to complete a JDA. Furthermore, the twelve promotion comparisons mandated by Title IV to ensure improvements in the quality of officers serving in the joint arena have driven policy changes in the assignment process.

Joint Duty Assessment

AFPC has instituted a formal process known as the “joint duty assessment” as part of the process for nominating top-quality officers to joint assignments. This process

consists of an assessment of the officer's prior performance and promotion potential by AFPC personnel, and culminates in approval/disapproval by the Commander, AFPC.³ If an officer fails the joint duty assessment, he/she will not be nominated for a joint assignment. The joint duty assessment is not required for officers attending ISS or SSS in-residence—they are considered to have already met the quality requirements intended by Title IV. According to a recent DoD Inspector General report, three key quality indicators used by the Air Force in selecting officers for JDAs: (1) BPZ promotions, (2) in-residence PME, or (3) service in a command billet.⁴

Impact on Executive Development Window

Goldwater-Nichols added an additional requirement to the executive development equation. The shortage of joint billets and the formal requirement for a joint duty assessment have markedly increased the competition for joint assignments.

The best time to complete a joint tour is early in the executive development window due to the grade distribution of billets on the JDAL. The JDAL contains more major billets than lieutenant colonel billets, and more lieutenant colonel billets than colonel billets. The competition for these billets strongly favors majors who have been promoted early and/or those selected for ISS/SSS.

Impact of Air Force Restructure

The traditional leadership test for promotion to BG had historically been wing commander. With BGs now filling these billets, the traditional command test was virtually eliminated. At the same time, the reorganization established the group structure, which created a new command test. “The key command test for our current population of

general officers was wing commander.... With the advent of the objective wing structure, the command test has shifted to the operations group or equivalent.”⁵

As a result of the key leadership test shifting to operations group commander (OG/CC) for rated officers, the Wg/CV was no longer viewed as a stepping stone toward promotion. Although the preponderance of general officers (including General McPeak) had historically served as Wg/CVs before moving into Wg/CC positions, Wg/CV no longer seemed to fit into the career path toward general officer. The emerging philosophy was that there was little OPD value in being second in command of a wing.

Two key leadership positions historically filled by competitive colonels—Wg/CC and Wg/CV—were now replaced by one competitive billet—OG/CC. This resulted in intense competition for the limited number of group commander positions.

In addition to the leadership test shifting from Wg/CC to OG/CC, General McPeak also envisioned an environment in which group commanders completed this key leadership test as early as possible. According to General McPeak: “Group commanders who do well will move on to senior service school and to follow-on assignment to a joint or headquarters staff. Then comes promotion to brigadier general and wider opportunities for command at the general officer level.”⁶

In summary, the Air Force restructure shifted the command test for competitive colonels from Wg/CC to OG/CC, eliminated Wg/CV as a viable position for competitive colonels, and established a precedent for completing an OG/CC as early as possible.

Impact of Changes in the Officer Assignment System

OPD had historically been viewed as a shared responsibility between commanders, individual officers, and the Air Force personnel system as represented by resource

managers (now called assignment officers).⁷ Officers were frequently selected for assignments aimed at developing the officer for future leadership positions.

With the advent of OVAS in 1991, the ultimate burden for OPD development shifted to the individual officer. The commander's role became one of advising an officer as opposed to steering their careers. Even the role of the personnel system changed. Resource managers—who previously served as part of the OPD process—were replaced by assignment officers with a much narrower role of matching faces with spaces.⁸

Even General Fogleman's transformation of the OVAS in 1996 left OPD solely in the hands of the individual officer. The new OAS made all officers vulnerable to involuntary reassignment. However, this only applied to positions that could not be filled with volunteers. The net result was for officers to search for assignments to “restart their time-on-station clock” when they felt vulnerable.

Critics of the assignment system in place prior to 1991 often argued it was designed to “groom every officer to become chief of staff of the Air Force.”⁹ The new system seems to assume young officers will have foresightedness to pursue a balanced career. This system fails to recognize officer perspectives may change, as they become more senior. The net impact has been the replacement of formal OPD with a process designed simply to cater to the short-term goals of individual officers.

Impact of Command Screening Board

The stated goal of the CSB was to level the playing field to permit more officers to compete for group and wing command positions. The CSB process arguably provides a much larger pool of officers from which to choose the key leaders. In practice, only those officers who have been promoted BPZ have a realistic chance of being selected for

rated Wg/CC or OG/CC billets. Note that the CSB process is not used to select Wg/CVs; this is consistent with Gen McPeak's philosophy on being second in command.

The selection criteria for group and wing command can be viewed from two different points of view that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. From the warfighter's point of view, commanders must possess the depth of operational experience to lead troops in combat and upon which to base decisions regarding the employment of those forces under his/her command. Alternatively, the current shortage of command billets and the decision to use group commander as the key leadership test for promotion to BG—both driven by the Air Force restructure discussed above—can lead to a different point of view. When strictly examined from this perspective, only those officers who are viable contenders for BG should be selected for group and wing command.

The selection criteria established for the CSB are very broad and inclusive. Group commander candidates must be colonels or colonel-selects with less than 24 years of TAFCS. Wing commander candidates must be colonels with less than 26 years of commissioned service. Rated officers must have flown within the last seven years.¹⁰

The intense competition reflects an increased emphasis on building a pool of officers who are competitive for promotion to BG, possibly at the expense of operational experience. The path of progression defined by General McPeak—group command, SSS, joint/headquarters—set the stage for selecting group commanders as early as possible.

Based on an analysis of CSB results, the CSB process appears to have institutionalized an increased emphasis on early promotion as an unwritten criterion for selection of group and wing commander candidates. Many would argue early promotion has become the most important factor in selection of group and wing commanders. Prior

to the implementation of the CSB process, 95% of rated Wg/CC candidates and 83% of OG/CC candidates had been promoted BPZ at least once. The CY96B CSB yielded the following results—97% of the rated Wg/CC candidates and 100% of the OG/CC commander candidates had been promoted early at least once.¹¹ The impact of recent CSB trends on OPD and the officer corps in general will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Notes

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Chapter 6

Leadership Development Today

The traditional leadership development model discussed in Chapter 3 has undergone significant revisions as a result of changes in the executive development landscape discussed in Chapter 4. Given these changes, the current model is characterized by an shorter and more complex executive development window than the traditional model.

The Current Leadership Development Model

The Air Force's current leadership development philosophy is described in Air Force Pamphlet (AFP) 36-2630, Officer Professional Development Guide. This guide provides a broad framework that addresses four different OPD tracks.¹

The fly only track reflects a career path with limited potential primarily characterized by tours in the cockpit or cockpit-related duties. In practice, this track would likely result in a failure to remain competitive for promotion.²

The staff track provides a path for rated officers to branch out into different career fields after completion of their second gate to focus on staff specialties. Although most will not return to the cockpit, some may later transition back to the leadership track.³

The operations track is the path followed by officers pursuing both solid operational credentials and staff experience. Many of these officers will fill field grade squadron leadership positions and some may be move to the leadership track.⁴

The leadership track “produces our pilot senior leaders. It includes officers from the staff or operations track who have had at least one below the promotion zone (BPZ) promotion or attended professional military education (PME)—intermediate service school (ISS) or senior service school (SSS) in-residence.”⁵ The model is an officer with solid operational credentials and a blend of Pentagon, joint, or MAJCOM staff tours.

The current leadership model is typically followed by rated officers seeking to become OG/CCs, Wg/CCs, and/or general officers. It is based largely on the concept of the leadership track described above. This path also reflects some alterations to the original sequence advocated by General McPeak. The general tendency is for officers to complete SSS following a squadron commander tour either as a lieutenant colonel or as a colonel-select. Following SSS some will be selected for group command billets by the CSB; others will move to senior staff positions. Subsequent CSBs will later select some of those in senior staff positions for group command.

The current leadership model is shown below. Following completion of an OG/CC tour, some competitive officers will be selected by subsequent CSBs to wing command billets as colonels. Since most wings are filled by BGs, these positions are extremely limited. Other OG/CCs will move to key staff billets to compete for BG promotion.

Wing Commander (very limited for O-6s) or Key Staff Billet	1-2 years
Senior Staff Tour (Joint or Headquarters)	2-3 years
Operations Group Commander	2 year
Senior Service School	2 years
Squadron Commander	2 year
Operations Officer	1 year
Initial Staff Tour (Joint or Pentagon)	2-3 years
Intermediate Service School	1 year
Total	13-15 years

Figure 4. Current Leadership Development Model

The model depicted above reflects a total of 13-15 years of requirements. The factor of time is extremely important in this model. The executive development window only provides 12 years but there are 13-15 years of requirements.

Officers who are promoted BPZ to major must still comply with the new gate structure—in rare circumstances some may leave the cockpit prior to completion of the second gate. One year can be added back to the executive development window by pulling BPZ major-selects out of the cockpit after completion of the first gate—the end on the 9th year. The additional year of flying duty can easily be completed by returning to the cockpit in time to complete the second gate. The next chapter will address some of the areas where time has been cut to accelerate some officers through the model.

Quality Indicators for Identifying Future Leaders

The leadership track described in AFPAM 36-2630 focuses primarily on officers who have been promoted BPZ and/or have attended ISS/SSS in residence. It also stresses the need to building a solid flying background and a mixture of high-level staff jobs (MAJCOM, Air Staff or joint).⁶ From this information, the author has identified several quality indicators used to identify, develop, and track future leaders. These quality indicators appear in a variety of other documents including promotion board statistics, joint duty assessment policies, CSB results, and colonel/general officer demographic data.

Six quality indicators that will be discussed in this report are as follows: (1) command experience; (2) completion of a JDA; (3) completion of a Pentagon tour; (4) in-residence completion of ISS and/or SSS; (5) operational credibility, and (6) BPZ promotion to major, lieutenant colonel, and/or colonel. All six of these quality indicators

rely on job performance and all six can be traced directly back to AFPAM 36-2630. The sections below will discuss why each of these factors is important as a quality indicator for identifying future leaders.

Command Experience

Command experience has long been viewed as a key criterion for selecting future Air Force leaders. “The importance of command experience, both to the Air Force and the officer, cannot be overemphasized. Command duty gives the Air Force an opportunity to evaluate an officer’s capabilities in leadership positions. It also gives each officer the chance to acquire managerial techniques required for higher-level responsibilities.”⁷

The opportunity to command is extremely limited, especially for rated officers. The first opportunity for command normally occurs at the squadron level as a lieutenant colonel. Each MAJCOM has established a board process for selecting squadron commanders. As discussed in the preceding chapter, a centralized Command Screening Board conducted annually at AFPC chooses group and wing commanders.

Completion of Joint Duty Assignment

From an OPD point of view, joint duty also serves to broaden an officer’s experience base by learning how the other Services operate. The Air Force, more than any other Service, has embraced the intent of Goldwater-Nichols by assigning its top officers to the joint arena.

Goldwater-Nichols has gone a long way toward improving the quality of officers who are serving or have served in the joint arena. In the executive development equation, completion of a JDA is the only quality indicator that is a statutory requirement. The competition for a JDA is intense because of the Title IV links to the officer promotion

system. Although not a board process, the formal joint duty assessment culminating with approval by the AFPC Commander ensures high quality officers are nominated for JDAs. Consequently, completion of a JDA has emerged as a new quality indicator.

Pentagon Tour

Although many officers may want to avoid the Washington DC-area, a Pentagon tour remains an important step in OPD. The perspective obtained from service at the highest levels in DoD, the Joint Staff, and the Air Staff undoubtedly broadens an officer's background and lays a solid foundation for those who move into more senior positions.

The Pentagon tour also offers an opportunity to "kill two birds with one stone." Some officers may gain the Pentagon experience while also completing a joint tour on the Joint Staff or in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Many senior colonels and generals serve multiple tours in the Pentagon, so a tour as a field grade officer is generally viewed as a quality indicator for identifying future leaders.

In-Residence Professional Military Education

Officer PME is a key part of OPD. While seminar and correspondence courses provide a means of completing PME, the optimum method is to attend an in-residence course. These courses allow officers to focus solely on PME without distractions. It also allows the opportunity to exchange ideas with officers from other US military services, allied nations, and civilian agencies.

The process used to select officers for in-residence ISS/SSS is extremely competitive. Many officers are chosen as candidates in conjunction with officer promotion boards. Others are nominated as candidates by their MAJCOMs. Designation boards convene at AFPC each year to select officers to attend the various schools.

According to AFPAM 36-2630, about 30 percent of the officers selected for major will attend ISS in-residence. For SSS, the opportunity drops to about 12 percent of any particular year group.⁸

Because of the selectivity of the process and the breadth of experience gained, attendance at ISS and/or SSS is a significant quality indicator for identifying future leaders. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, AFPAM 36-2630 cites this as one of the factors placing officers on the leadership track.

Operational Credibility

Operational credibility is not defined or specifically discussed in AFPAM 36-2630, but it is implied by many of the statements contained in this pamphlet.

“Building technical expertise occurs early in your flying career whether you desire to ‘fly only’ or be a leader. In this area you show technical expertise with timely upgrades to instructor and/or evaluator and established a broad base of operational expertise. Without a solid foundation of technical knowledge, you cannot build the remaining legs of experience.”⁹

In addition to building an early base of technical experience, rated officers must also periodically update their operational credentials or their technical skills will perish. Operational credibility will be defined as building and maintaining a sufficient depth and breadth of operational experience to be a credible leader of a flying organization. While this is a subjective assessment, there are certain indicators that can help in assessing an officer’s operational credentials. These include the record of evaluations contained in an officer’s flight evaluation folder, levels of qualification obtained (such as flight lead, aircraft commander, instructor, or evaluator), and recency of operational experience. Officer Performance Reports, although sometimes inflated, also help to document performance in the operational environment.

Early Promotion

BPZ promotion provides a means of identifying top-notch officers and accelerating their promotion to major, lieutenant colonel, and/or colonel. Current Air Force policy permits BPZ promotions up to two years early for major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel. The maximum BPZ selection quota currently used in the Air Force is 5 percent for major, 7.5 percent for lieutenant colonel, and 15 percent for colonel.¹⁰

Because of the competitiveness of the BPZ process, early promotion also serves as a key quality indicator for identifying future Air Force leaders. In the next chapter, the role played by early promotion will be discussed in greater detail.

Notes

¹ Air Force Pamphlet (AFP) 36-2630. *Officer Professional Development Guide*, 3 May 1995, pp. 5-7.

² Ibid, p. 6.

³ Ibid, p. 6.

⁴ Ibid, p. 6.

⁵ Ibid, p. 6.

⁶ Ibid, pp. 6-9.

⁷ AFR 36-23, 39.

⁸ Air Force Regulation (AFR) 36-23. *Officer Career Development*, 11 March 1985, p. 9.

⁹ Air Force Pamphlet (AFP) 36-2630. *Officer Professional Development Guide*, 3 May 1995, p. 6.

¹⁰ Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2611. *Officer Professional Development*, 1 April 1996, p. 8.

Chapter 7

Shortcomings of the Current Leadership Model

The current leadership model evolved as a result of the changes that occurred over the past decade. The resulting environment has presented numerous challenges for OPD. While future leaders are still being identified and developed, it is now more difficult to provide the proper balance of operational, staff, command, and educational experience. In this chapter, some of the shortcomings of the current career path will be discussed.

Overemphasis on BPZ Promotion

The Air Force promotion system does an exceptional job of identifying top-notch officers who have performed superbly in the past and have demonstrated exceptional potential for advancement. This system also provides the opportunity to accelerate the promotion of a small pool of officers through the BPZ selection process.

However, it is important to keep BPZ selection in the proper context. The quality of today's officer force is at an all time high. Although BPZ selection identifies some of the most talented Air Force officers, it does not necessarily follow that officers who are not promoted early are of a lower quality. It is a leap of faith to assume all officers promoted BPZ are of a higher quality than all officers who have never been promoted early.

Although early promotion has always served as an indicator of future potential, it has historically been seen as one of many quality indicators. What has changed over the past

few years is the relative importance of BPZ promotion compared to other quality indicators. Until recently, BPZ promotion was not discussed in any of the Air Force's OPD publications. AFPAM 36-2630, which was published in 1995, was the first OPD guide that mentioned BPZ promotion. As discussed earlier, this pamphlet defined the leadership track as being composed of officers with at least one BPZ promotion or who have attended ISS/SSS in-residence.¹

Other Service Views on Early Promotion

Although the same promotion laws govern all four Services, each Service has taken a different view with regard to the emphasis placed on early promotion in OPD and in the selection for senior leadership positions.

BPZ promotions are extremely rare in the US Marine Corps (USMC). According to their Promotion Policy Branch, the USMC views early promotion as being somewhat careerist. Most USMC promotion lists for major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel typically have fewer than five officers selected for early promotion. Senior Marine Corps leaders frequently see early promotion as trading away valuable experience.²

The US Navy (like the Air Force) permits officers to be promoted up to two years early to lieutenant commander, commander, and captain. However, the Navy promotes considerably less than their authorized quota of officers early. According to their Officer Plans Branch, early promotion is not strongly emphasized in any aspect of officer professional development.³

The US Army limits early promotion in two ways. The Army only allows officers to be promoted one year early to major and/or lieutenant colonel. Colonel selection boards

are allowed to select officers up to two years early. In addition, the US Army rarely promotes their full quota of officers early to any grade.⁴

Of the four Services, the Air Force places the greatest emphasis on BPZ promotion. The intense competition for OG/CC billets combined with General McPeak's philosophy on timing—group command, SSS, joint/headquarters—signaled a new emphasis on early promotion in Air Force OPD. In order to complete the requirements in the sequence envisioned by General McPeak, an officer had to pin on colonel well before the 20-year point. Although early promotion has always been an important screening factor, this new career path placed an emphasis on depth of early promotion—the earlier the better.

The increased emphasis on early promotion can be seen in many personnel policies. Officers selected for early promotion are automatically placed on the candidate list for in-residence PME. The joint duty assessment process uses in-residence PME, early promotion, and command experience as screening criteria for joint assignments.

Early promotion plays an increasingly important role in selection for command as indicated by the results of the CY96B CSB—100 percent of all OG/CC candidates and 97 percent of all rated Wg/CC candidates had at least one early promotion. The emphasis on depth of early promotion can also be seen in the same CSB statistics—61 percent of the OG/CC candidates and 79 percent of the Wg/CC candidates had been promoted at least three years early.⁵ These results illustrate the “trickle-down” effect discussed earlier in the chapter on senior officer management.

Role of BPZ in Selection of General/Flag Officers for Other Services

Another interesting comparison can be made between the Services with regard to the role played by BPZ promotion in the selection of their general officers. In the Air Force,

virtually every line BG-select has received at least one early promotion. The average Air Force BG-select has 24 years time in service, 5.5 years time in TIG as a colonel, and was promoted an aggregate of three years BPZ to major, lieutenant colonel, and/or colonel.⁶

The USMC promoted 14 brigadier general during their last BG promotion board. Their average BG-select had 25.6 years TIS and 3.1 years TIG. Most telling, only one of 14 BG-selects had ever received an early promotion—93 percent were on-time officers.⁷

The average Navy O-7 select from their most recent promotion board had 26.9 years TIS and 5.1 years TIG. Approximately 30 percent of the officers selected for promotion to O-7 had never received an early promotion.⁸

Like the Air Force, the Army tends to promote most officers to BG around the 24-year point. The average BG-select chosen by the Army's CY97 promotion board had 24 years TIS and 2.7 years TIG as a colonel. Of the 46 officers selected for promotion, 16 (35 percent) had never been promoted early. Another 14 had only been promoted one year early—11 of those to colonel. Twelve of the 46 officers were two years early and 4 were three years early; none of the 46 BG-selects had been promoted the maximum of 4 years ahead of their contemporaries.

Given the fact that the other Services are faced with the same upper end constraints in terms of MRD, how can they afford to promote on time officers to O-7? The answer to this question lies can partially be explained by noting the average TIS and TIG for officers promoted by each of the Services.

Air Force and Navy O-7 selects have an average of 5 or more years TIG as colonels/captains. This permits promotions boards to evaluate a longer period of performance as an O-6 as a basis for promotion to O-7. Navy policy requires officers to

have 3 years TIG as a captain before they are eligible for promotion to flag rank.⁹ On average, the Navy promotes officers to O-7 an average of 2 years later than the Air Force. Since the Navy promotion window is later as compared to the Air Force, there is less emphasis on early promotion. This allows room for balance between BPZ and on-time officers in their flag ranks.

The Army uses the same 24-year promotion window as the Air Force. However, the Army allows officers to be promoted to BG with less TIG than the Air Force. Army policy allows colonels to become eligible for promotion as soon as they have one year TIG as a colonel.¹⁰ On average, their BG selects have almost two years less TIG as compared to the Air Force.

Is the Air Force overemphasizing early promotion? Is the Air Force identifying its future leaders too early? Without a doubt, the Air Force places more emphasis on early promotion than any of the other Services. BPZ promotion has become more than a quality indicator; it has become a de facto prerequisite for advancement to OG/CC, Wg/CC, and promotion to BG.

Shortened Command Tours

Under the traditional leadership model, most MAJCOMs adhered to an unwritten guideline for squadron commanders to serve 24-month tours. Many commanders are now serving between 12 and 18 months in these critical assignments. As an example, the author recently completed a 15-month tour as a flying squadron commander. Two of the other three flying squadron commanders in the same wing completed their command tours with even less time in command.

Several factors may have contributed to the reduction in command tour lengths among rated commanders. The drawdown in the number of flying squadrons as a result of downsizing has diminished the opportunity for officers to command flying squadrons. Shorter command tour lengths for flying squadron commanders allows more officers the opportunity to command.

Another reason may also stem from the rigid joint requirements imposed by Goldwater-Nichols. The JDA has added an additional requirement to the executive development path for competitive officers, but no additional time has been added. Frequently, many officers find themselves trying to complete ISS in-residence, a Pentagon tour and/or a joint duty assignment, SSS in-residence, and a tour as a squadron commander during the period between the end of their second gate and the time they meet an O-6 promotion board. For officers who have been promoted BPZ, this timeframe is even more compressed. The tendency is to spend more time completing the staff (joint and/or Pentagon assignments) and PME requirements (ISS/SSS in-residence) and less time at the squadron level.

There are several disadvantages to reduced command tours. A command tour provides an opportunity for an officer's leadership skills to be tested at one level before moving on to command positions at higher levels. Commanders need time to develop and implement programs within their units and to establish relationships necessary to provide mentorship to their subordinates. As command tours shorten, it becomes more difficult for senior leaders to adequately assess the officer's impact on the organization that he/she is commanding. Unfortunately, it may also give the appearance of "ticket-punching."

Reduced Emphasis on Operational Credibility

Commanders must be able to lead their troops into combat on short-notice. At the same time, subordinates rely on them to make informed decisions based on a certain level of expertise. Because of the complexities involved in safely operating aircraft and commanding flying organizations, operational credibility is extremely important.

Operational credibility is acquired through experience in the cockpit or cockpit related staff jobs. In order to maintain operational credibility, rated officers must establish a solid foundation early in their careers. This experience must be periodically updated through subsequent tours in the cockpit or their skills as a pilot or navigator will deteriorate. A commander who lacks operational credibility faces a difficult challenge in garnering the respect of the troops assigned to his/her unit.

Over the past few years, the relative importance of operational credibility has received less emphasis in OPD. In the author's opinion, this stems partly from the changes in career paths brought about by the factors discussed in Chapter 6. The new gate structure mandated by the Aviation Career Improvement Act of 1989 has resulted in rated officers staying in the cockpit longer during the earlier part of their career.

General McPeak's vision was for commanders at the squadron, group, wing, and numbered air force levels to be actively involved in operations. He established a written requirement for all numbered air force commanders and OG/CCs to maintain qualification as flight examiners—the highest rated qualification one can achieve.¹¹ In practice, few senior commanders have met this requirement. His vision of the OG/CC being a “warrior all the way”¹² has simply not materialized.

Rated officers frequently spend several years out of the cockpit before returning to flying duties. Ideally, these officers should return to a flying assignment where they can refine their operational skills before moving into senior squadron leadership positions.

The role of operational credibility in selecting commanders also tends to be ill defined and underemphasized. The CSB criteria for screening rated Wg/CC and OG/CC candidates only requires officers to have had flying experience within the past 7 years.¹³ At the squadron commander-level, some MAJCOMs have selected officers to command squadrons flying major weapon systems in which they have no prior experience. Others move directly into squadron command billets following protracted absences from rated duties. Because of the length of time required to upgrade to mission ready status in many of today's complex weapon systems, some squadron commanders have spent nearly their entire command tour in an unqualified or not-mission-ready status.

Unfortunately, these types of scenarios have the danger of creating a certain amount of cynicism among some of the officer corps. Some officers tend to view their commanders as "ticket punchers" who lack operational credibility. Consider the following extract for an *Air Force Times* article:

"The problem begins when that officer, especially with a career in flying, has to stay in staff jobs and away from the cockpit to remain competitive for promotion. After several years, the officer goes back to a wing command job—the proving ground for O-6 or general officer promotion.

Unfortunately, the officer comes back with little experience in the unit's primary mission.

Although it is fair to say—in general—that leadership does not depend on technical expertise and experience, that is just not valid for flying.

To gain respect from one's troops, you have to prove yourself in the airplane as well as the office. In peacetime, the commander might survive without the respect of his troops, but woe to the wing that must go to war with such leadership."¹⁴

At the time the article quoted above was written, the author was an 11-year career officer attending the College of Naval Command and Staff College who had recently been promoted to major below the zone.¹⁵

Division of the Officer Corps

The current leadership development model tends to divide the officer corps into distinct groups based upon criteria used for identifying future Air Force leaders. The first division occurs based on the results of promotion boards. The second division occurs between those officers who have completed JDAs and those who are “joint-lackers.”

BPZ Officers versus On-Time Officers

The increased emphasis placed on BPZ promotion in identifying future Air Force leaders has polarized the officer corps. While BPZ promotion is important, many officers believe it is currently the most important factor in the eyes of today’s senior leaders.

BPZ promotion has become extremely important in the selection of OG/CCs (formerly Wg/Dos), rated Wg/CCs, and BGs. Although not quite as critical, it is also become an increasingly important factor in the selection of flying squadron commanders.

BPZ officers stand a significant advantage in attending ISS/SSS in-residence since early promotees to major or lieutenant colonel are automatically placed on the respective school candidate list. BPZ promotion also plays an important role in the joint duty assessment process used for selecting officers for JDAs.

The combination of these factors results in a self-fulfilling prophesy—those selected for early promotion receive priority in the selection processes for ISS/SSS, JDAs, squadron command, operations group command, wing command, and BG. The policy

decisions governing senior officer management “trickle-down” throughout OPD personnel policies.

Joint Haves and Joint Have-Nots

The officer corps is also being divided into “joint haves” and “joint have-nots” as a result of Goldwater-Nichols. Due to Congressional reporting requirements specified in Title IV, the Services must be very selective when identifying officers for joint billets.

Since completion of a JDA is a prerequisite for promotion to BG, one could argue that a JDA is only important if an officer is being groomed to become a BG. This point of view ignores the impact of this requirement on other personnel policies.

Because of the limited number of joint billets on the JDAL, the Services are driven to identify their future leaders as early as possible. Some critics feel the current system is driving the Services to identify their future leaders too early.

“With command screening, school boards, and the joint O-7 rule we are creating a caste system that may not be in the best interest of the ‘warfighting’ experience that has traditionally guided our Corps. If, like the Air Force, we are willing to make our selections for flag rank at the O-4 level, there is no problem, but we must then be willing to accept the professional consequences...”¹⁶

Lack of Room for Late-Bloomers or On-Time Officers

So where does the current system leave the “late-bloomer” or the on-time officer? The premium placed on early promotion relative to other quality indicators may be adversely impacting today’s officer corps. Many on-time officers feel their potential beyond squadron commander is extremely limited. Consequently, the Air Force may be inadvertently encouraging many top-notch officers to remove themselves from the

leadership track by pursuing post-command tour jobs that do not prepare them for future leadership positions; others may simply opt to retire.

Not every officer is going to be (or should be) an OG/CC, Wg/CC, or a general officer. The pool of competitors for these positions has always narrowed down as officers advance through their careers. Until recently, many on-time officers still felt they had a chance of becoming a “late bloomer” and moving on to these key billets.

What has changed over the past few years is the point at which it became apparent to an officer that he/she was no longer on the leadership track. Under the current system, many on-time officers with superb records are not competitive for many of the “stepping stones” needed to advance toward more senior leadership positions simply because they have never received an early promotion.

Return of Careerism

The net result of many of the shortcomings described in the preceding pages may be characterized as a resurgence of careerism. One author defined careerism as “the jockeying for assignments in order to enhance individual prospects for promotion.”¹⁷ Many officers are more focused on their next assignment or on finding the right job in order to increase their chance of obtaining an early promotion.

BPZ promotion has become a goal or even an expectation among some officers. Many officers have served as squadron commanders, completed a JDA, attended ISS/SSS in-residence, and maintained superior records of performance. Unfortunately, some of these officers have become disillusioned because they perceive their future potential has been limited simply because they have never been promoted early.

Many officers who have already been promoted early have expressed concern that they are not early enough to be competitive. According to one source, “This competition has become so intense that any officer who is promoted below the zone, or early, is led to think that any on time promotion is a career death sentence. To receive consideration for command, the officer believes he must receive early promotion throughout his career.”¹⁸

Notes

¹ Air Force Pamphlet (AFP) 36-2630. Officer Professional Development Guide. 3 May 1995, p. 6.

² Maj Rusty Glover, HQ USMC/MMPR-1, Officer Promotions, telephone interview by author, 2 Dec 97.

³ LCDR Jim Hunter, USN BUPERS/PERS-212, Officer Plans Branch, telephone interview by author, 2 Dec 97.

⁴ Total Army Personnel Center, Military Support Division, Promotions Branch, Officer Promotions Section (TAPC-MSP-O), 2 Dec 97.

⁵ Air Force Colonel Matters Office (AF/DPO). “Colonels’ Issues.” Briefing to Air War College, 13 November 1997.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Maj Mike Peznola, HQ USMC, General Officer Management Office, telephone interview by author, 16 Dec 97.

⁸ LCDR Steve Trainor, HQ USN, Flag Officer Management and Distribution Advisor (PERS-NOOF), telephone interview by author, 16 Dec 97.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ CW5 Logan, DACS-GOM, General Officer Management Office, telephone interview by author, 15 Dec 97.

¹¹ AFI 11-408, *Standardization/Evaluation Program Organization and Administration*, 1 October 1995, p. 2.

¹² James W. Canan. “One Base, One Wing, One Boss.” *Air Force Magazine*, August 1991, pp. 17-19.

¹³ Air Force Colonel Matters Office. (AF/DPO). “Colonel Command Selection Process.” On-line. Internet, 2 December 1997. Available from <http://www.colonels.hq.af.mil>.

¹⁴ Maj John Shanahan. “The Military Is About War, Not Peace.” *Air Force Times*, 5 February 1996, p. 31.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 31.

¹⁶ William F. McCulloch, II. “Joint Officer Management.” *Marine Corps Gazette*, June 1994, p. 18.

¹⁷ Col Mackubin T. Owens, Jr. “Goldwater-Nichols: A Ten-Year Retrospective.” *Marine Corps Gazette*, December 1996, p. 50.

¹⁸ Maj John Shanahan. “The Military Is About War, Not Peace.” *Air Force Times*, 5 February 1996, p. 31.

Chapter 8

Senior Leadership Options for Restoring the Balance

The author conducted a survey of 280 rated Air Force officers in support of this research project. The survey population consisted of active duty, rated Air Force officers attending the Air War College (AWC) Class of 1998, the Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) Class of 1998, and Squadron Officer School (SOS) Class 98B. Survey response was superb--approximately 80 percent of the rated field grade officers attending AWC/ACSC and nearly 100 percent of the rated company grade officers attending SOS Class 98B replied to the survey.

The purpose of this survey was to assess officer attitudes and perceptions on a variety of issues. The survey measured officer opinions on which quality indicators they feel the Air Force thinks are currently the most (and least) important in identifying future leaders. These officers were then asked to rank order the same quality indicators according to the amount of importance they believe these factors should have in identifying future leaders. Among the other areas evaluated were officer perceptions regarding the importance of command at one level in preparing officers to command at higher levels, the optimum tour lengths for commanders at various levels, the relationship between BPZ promotion and future advancement, and issues related to operational credibility. The survey results will be discussed in the following sections along with

several options and recommendations for addressing potential shortcomings in today's leadership development environment. Detailed results of this survey are contained in Appendix A.

Quality Indicators—Perceived Importance versus Desired Importance

Before discussing options for restoring the balance between the various factors used to identify future senior Air Force leaders, it is important to decide if there really is a problem. Is there a disconnect between what today's officers perceive is important to the senior Air Force leadership and what they think should be important?

The survey asked these officers to prioritize seven factors into two different lists. The first list reflects the **perceived importance** these officers believe senior officers place on each of these 7 factors in identifying future Air Force leaders. The second list reflects the **desired importance** these officers believe should be placed on each of these factors. The responses to these two prioritized lists were broken down into the following categories: overall results, field grade officers (AWC/ACSC), company grade officers (SOS), on-time field grade officers, and BPZ field grade officers. The responses to these two questions are shown in Figures 6 and 7.

These survey responses strongly indicated a disconnect between what officers believe is important to senior leaders and what they think should be important. Most officers believe senior leaders place the greatest emphasis on BPZ promotion and SSS in-residence while the least emphasis is placed on operational credibility. There was no difference between the perceptions of field grade and company grade officers, or between the responses of on-time versus BPZ field grade officers.

<u>Quality Indicator</u>	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Field Grade</u>	<u>Company Grade</u>	<u>On-Time</u>	<u>BPZ</u>
BPZ Promotion	1	1	1	1	1
SSS In-Residence	2	2	2	2	2
Squadron Command	3	5	3	5	4
Job Performance	4	3	4	3	3
Joint Duty Assignment	5	4	5	4	5
Pentagon Tour	6	6	6	6	6
Operational Credibility	7	7	7	7	7

Figure 5. Perceived Importance of Quality Indicators

The same group of officers believes the greatest emphasis should be placed on job performance and operational credibility while the least emphasis should be placed on BPZ promotion. Once again, there is virtually no difference between the perceptions of field grade and company grade officers, nor between the responses of on-time versus BPZ field grade officers. The one exception was company grade officers felt the Pentagon tour should be the least important and BPZ promotions should be the second to last in order of importance.

<u>Quality Indicator</u>	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Field Grade</u>	<u>Company Grade</u>	<u>On-Time</u>	<u>BPZ</u>
Job Performance	1	1	1	1	1
Operational Credibility	2	2	2	2	2
Squadron Command	3	3	3	5	4
SSS In-Residence	4	4	4	3	3
Joint Duty Assignment	5	5	5	4	5
Pentagon Tour	6	6	7	6	6
BPZ Promotion	7	7	6	7	7

Figure 6. Desired Importance of Quality Indicators

These results indicate field grade and company grade officers believe senior leadership is overemphasizing BPZ promotion and underemphasizing operational credibility. It is particularly important to note that field grade officers who had previously been promoted BPZ also share the same perceptions.

Several questions were asked in the survey to evaluate officer perceptions of the relationship between BPZ promotions and potential. The goal of these questions was to determine whether or not officer's perceived a "glass ceiling" in their ability to successfully compete for squadron command, operations group command, wing command, and/or BG without a BPZ promotion.

The officers surveyed did not perceive a strong relationship between early promotion and selection for squadron commander or Wg/CV positions. In fact, 89 percent believe on-time officers can become squadron commanders and 57 percent believe on-time officers can become Wg/CVs. Other than these two positions, the officers surveyed were more pessimistic about the on-time officer's chances of becoming an OG/CC, Wg/CC, or BG. While half of the officers indicated an on-time officer could become an OG/CC, 61 percent felt officers are not viable candidates without a BPZ promotion.

Only one-third of the officers surveyed believe an on-time officer can become a Wg/CC or BG. In order to be a viable candidate for Wg/CC, 75 percent of the officers believe a BPZ promotion is required. As a rule, field grade officers and on-time officers provided more pessimistic responses than company grade officers and BPZ officers.

So what should senior leadership do to restore the balance between the quality indicators used in identifying future Air Force leaders? What should be done to increase the emphasis on operational credibility in the executive development process? In the following pages, several options will be addressed.

Extend Mandatory Retirement Dates for O-9 and O-10

As discussed in Chapter 2, a key factor driving the Air Force's emphasis on early promotion can be traced to the Service's senior officer management policies. More

specifically, Air Force philosophy strives to develop a relative young BG force typically selected for promotion around the 24th year of service. This policy results in those BGs who are not selected for promotion to major general retiring at approximately 30 years of service—driven by 5 years TIG. It also provides a larger base of competitive officers with enough time remaining to achieve three or four stars.

Other Services place less emphasis on BPZ promotion and accept a more senior general officer force. By selecting more senior officers, their general officers have less time available between selection for O-7 and mandatory retirement. This frequently results in general officers spending less time in each senior command and staff billet.¹

Congress recently took notice of this. Many expressed concern over the rapid turnover in O-7 and O-8 command billets. One Senate aid made the following observation:

“It is hard to believe someone can go to a critically important job, spend 18 months there and really have been a service to the nation. It takes a year, in many cases, just to learn the job and another six months to really become good at it...That leaves about two months of really productive work before they move on to another assignment.”²

Senator Dirk Kempthorne, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services personnel subcommittee, recently sponsored legislation to extend the MRDs for three- and four-stars. This legislation would permit three-stars to serve 38 years before mandatory retirement; four-stars would be allowed to remain until 40 years. This proposal was included in the 1998 Department of Defense Authorization Bill and became law when signed by President Clinton in November 1997.³

In light of this recent change, Air Force senior leadership now has an opportunity to reevaluate the underlying emphasis on early promotions in senior officer management policies. With the recent change in MRDs for three- and four-star generals, there is

arguably less need to emphasize early promotion throughout the OPD process. Even an on-time colonel could be promoted to BG and still have time to progress through the flag ranks before reaching mandatory retirement. This single change could better serve the Air Force by allowing more time for officers to achieve the optimum balance of operational, staff, educational, and command experience.

Recommendation 1: Air Force senior leadership should take advantage of the recent change in O-9 and O-10 MRDs by reevaluating the emphasis placed on early promotion in the Command Screening Board and brigadier general selection process.

Restructuring BPZ Promotions

Is the Air Force allowing some officers to be promoted too early or promoting too many officers BPZ? These are questions currently facing senior leadership. Senior Air Force leaders have begun to question whether it is in the best interest of the Service for officers to advance too quickly. Lt Gen McGinty, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, was recently quoted as saying: “As we look at developing future [Air Force] leaders, we do not need officers promoted six years below the zone.”⁴ Under his guidance, the Air Force has initiated a review of the rules and policies governing BPZ promotions.

Recommendation 2: Air Force senior leadership should reduce the overall depth of BPZ promotion by limiting BPZ eligibility for major and lieutenant colonel to one year early at each grade. This would allow 1 year early promotion to major, 1 year early to lieutenant colonel, and two years early to colonel—an aggregate total of four years early.

Recommendation 3: The Air Force should **not**, however, reduce the BPZ promotion opportunity; boards should continue to have the ability to select the same percentage of officers at each grade for early promotion.

Command Test Just Prior to O-7 Promotion Window

Current Air Force leadership philosophy tends to encourage completion of an OG/CC tour as early as possible. The desired path established by General McPeak was for officers to complete an OG/CC tour, then attend SSS followed by a key staff billet. If promoted to BG, officers would then return to command a wing.

This career path potentially results in an inordinate amount of time between completion of OG/CC and Wg/CC. Even though some officers complete their OG/CC tours as early as their 16th or 17th year of service, it is very rare for Air Force officers to be selected for BG earlier the 23-25 year window previously discussed. This sometimes results in rushing highly competitive officers through squadron and/or group commander tours and then “warehousing” them until they are viable candidates for promotion to BG.

An alternative approach would be to delay the OG/CC tour so that it becomes the last tour prior to becoming a viable candidate for promotion to BG. This would provide more time for building a balance of operational, command, staff, and educational credentials before receiving the key test for BG promotion. Successful OG/CCs could then progress to a key staff billet or one of the remaining O-6 Wg/CC billets to compete for promotion.

This approach would also allow more opportunity for the on-time officer or the late bloomer. By de-emphasizing the need to become an OG/CC as early as possible, the importance of BPZ promotion in relation to other quality indicators could be reduced. This would help restore balance in the quality indicators which might allow more on-time officers an opportunity to become OG/CCs, Wg/CCs, and potentially, general officers.

Recommendation 4: Air Force senior leadership should reevaluate the timing for OG/CC tours.

The Role of the Vice Wing Commander

The Air Force has discarded a key leadership billet as an OPD option for developing future leaders. For years, the Wg/CV position was viewed as a significant stepping stone in preparing competitive officers for Wg/CC positions and, ultimately, for the general officer ranks. For reasons that still remain unclear, Wg/CV lost its importance in the OPD equation because of the creation of the group commander position.

Today, Wg/CV is arguably more important than ever. The Wg/CV is frequently viewed as the continuity in a wing. Since most Wg/CCs are general officers, they spend a significant portion of their time away from their wings attending MAJCOM-level conferences, management level review boards, promotion boards, etc. In most wings, the Wg/CV spends a large portion of his time running the wing.

Most officers now view a Wg/CV assignment as a signal that they are no longer competitive for further advancement. More bluntly stated, many now view Wg/CV as a dead end job. This simply does not make sense. The decision to eliminate Wg/CV as an option for competitive officers discounts the value provided by exposing an operator to support issues before becoming a Wg/CC. It also ignores the mentorship that could be provided by having some of our future leader serve directly under a general officer wing commander. The Air Force is wasting a valuable leadership development opportunity.

Recommendation 5: Air Force senior leadership should restore the Wg/CV position as a viable option for continuing the development of future Wg/CCs and general officers.

Operational Credibility and the Army Model

The Army has a well-developed OPD model that is clearly laid out in Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3 (DA Pam 600-3), entitled Commissioned Officer Development

and Career Management. This publication provides a detailed OPD path for officers by branch. It tells officers what to expect at each level and establishes prerequisites for command at each level. Only those officers who meet these requirements are considered for command.

Branch Qualification and Command Prerequisites

The Army operates on a concept known as “branch qualification.” Company grade officers become branch qualified by serving with troops at the company, battalion, or brigade-levels as staff officers. Most branches also require officers to obtain command experience at the company level before being considered a branch qualified company grade officer.⁵ Company command is the capstone event in becoming a branch-qualified company grade officer.

To become branch qualified as a major, officers must serve at least 12 months in a branch-coded position, usually as a battalion executive officer (XO) or battalion operations and training officer (S-3). If an officer does not become branch qualified as a major, he/she will not be eligible to command a battalion.⁶

Branch qualification for lieutenant colonels consist of branch-coded billets at the battalion, brigade, division, or echelon above corps levels. Officers must serve a minimum of 12 months in these billets before being branch qualified lieutenant colonels. Only branch qualified officers can become battalion commanders.⁷

In order to become a brigade commander as a colonel, officers must have served as a battalion commander. Notice that each level of command serves as a prerequisite for command at the next level and operational experience requirements are also defined under the branch qualification concept.

Although the Army model is not perfect, it provides clear guidance to line officers and senior commanders with regard to senior leadership's OPD expectations. The following sections examine how this model might be applied to the Air Force.

Controlled Tour Lengths for Commanders

The Army also places very specific requirements on the length of time required for completion of a command tour. DA Pam 600-3 says that the vast majority of battalion and brigade commanders must serve 2 years in those positions.⁸ In reality, command tour lengths are rigidly controlled as 24-month tours (plus or minus 30 days) by the Chief of Staff of the Army. In order for an officer's command tour to be curtailed or extended between 31-60 days, the curtailment/extension must be approved by the Commander of the US Total Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM)—the equivalent of the Air Force's AFPC Commander. Curtailments or extensions of 61 or more days can only be approved by the Chief of Staff of the Army.⁹

The Air Force should implement a policy similar to the one described above. In the absence of a written policy, commander tour lengths vary greatly from MAJCOM to MAJCOM. Survey participants were asked their opinions on the optimum tour lengths for squadron, operations group, and wing commanders. The results are shown in the figure below:

Level	12 months	15 months	18 months	24 months
Squadron	2 %	3 %	32%	63%
Group	2%	6 %	47%	48%
Wing	3%	5%	36%	57%

Figure 7. Optimum Tour Lengths for Commanders

The author supports a policy of a 2 year controlled tour for squadron, group, and wing commanders. Based on survey results, a majority of the officers indicated the optimum tour length for squadron and wing commanders should be 24 months. Although no single response received a majority vote with regard to tour lengths for OG/CCs, 95% of the officers surveyed indicated OG/CC tour lengths should be 18 or 24 months. If operations group command is indeed the critical command test before advancement to BG, then a longer tour (24 months as opposed to 18 months) would seem to be more appropriate.

Controlled tour lengths help both the individual commander and the organization. Commanders need to stay in place long enough to have an impact on their organizations and for senior commanders to adequately assess their future potential. Changes of command create turmoil within an organization as subordinates adjust to a new leader and new policies. Frequent turnover creates unnecessary turbulence and may lead subordinates to view their commanders as temporary or as “ticket-punchers.”

Recommendation 6: USAF senior leaders should establish and enforce standard 2-year tour lengths for squadron, group, and wing commanders.

Experience Prerequisites

The Air Force should implement experience prerequisites similar to those contained in the Army’s branch qualification concept. With the current gate structure, some rated officers leave the cockpit after completing the second gate and then return to the cockpit as a flying squadron commander or OG/CC.

Should an officer be required to complete a field grade tour in the cockpit prior to serving as a squadron commander? Applying the Army’s concept, an officer would have

to serve as an operations officer, wing chief of safety, or in some other field grade flying requirement such as chief of training in an operations support squadron before being considered qualified to command a flying squadron. Officers who had been out of the cockpit for an extended period of time should not move *directly* into a flying squadron commander position without *first* revalidating their operational credentials.

Should a flying squadron commander be instructor qualified in his/her unit's primary aircraft? The survey also asked this question—84 percent of the respondents felt incumbent flying squadron commanders should be instructor qualified. Among company grade officers, 94 percent agreed. Flying squadron commanders need to have the necessary operational experience in the aircraft before they take command.

In the author's opinion, hands-on operational credibility is critically important at the squadron commander level. Subordinates expect commanders to be well versed in their unit's mission. In flying organizations, subordinates also expect their commanders to be proficient in their unit's aircraft. An officer who is unqualified in the unit's aircraft or who lacks operational credibility in the unit's mission should not command a flying organization. This sends the wrong signal to the organization on what is important in the eyes of senior leaders; it gives the impression the commander is simply filling a square.

Should command at one level be a prerequisite for command at the next level? In the Army, company command is a prerequisite for battalion command and battalion command is a prerequisite for brigade command. No similar requirement currently exists in the Air Force. Based on the survey results, 89 percent of the respondents stated squadron command should be a prerequisite for group command; 90 percent indicated

squadron command should be a prerequisite for wing command; and 69 percent believe group command should be a prerequisite for wing command.

Although not an official requirement, the CY97 CSB results indicate a relatively strong emphasis on command experience by senior leaders. Ninety percent of the OG/CC candidates had previously commanded a squadron and 100 percent of the rated Wg/CC candidates had previously commanded at the group level.¹⁰

Recommendation 7: Air Force senior leadership should establish formal prerequisites for command at various levels with regard to command experience and operational credibility. These prerequisites should include clearly defined criteria to ensure commanders of flying organizations at all levels have sufficient operational depth in their unit's primary aircraft and mission.

Notes

¹ Cymort Calnot, Carol S. Moore, and LCDR John T. Ostlund. *The Length of Flag Careers*. Study. Center for Naval Analyses. Alexandria VA, September 1995 p. 8.

² Rick Maze, "Generals could stay 40 years under plan," *Air Force Times*, 3 November 1997, p. 26.

³ Ibid, 26.

⁴ Bryant Jordan, "Early promotion rules reviewed," *Air Force Times*, 22 December 1997, p. 4.

⁵ Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA Pam) 600-3, Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management, 8 June 1995, pp. 6-7.

⁶ Ibid, pp. 8-9.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 9-10.

⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

⁹ Lt Gen F. E. Vollrath, Commander, US Total Army Personnel Command, subject: CDPL Command Extension and Curtailment Policy, 15 January 1997.

¹⁰ Hankins, Col Paul. Chief, Air Force Colonel Matters Office (AF/DPO). Briefing on "Colonels' Issues." Air War College, 13 November 1997.

Chapter 9

Concluding Remarks

Unprecedented change has characterized the past decade. These changes have carried over into how the Air Force manages OPD. OPD has become more complicated: new requirements have been added with no additional time to complete them.

Traditional leadership paths have been dramatically altered and command billets have been reduced as a result of downsizing. In most cases, Wg/CC billets are now filled by general officers and Wg/CV billets have been eliminated from the executive development equation as a option for competitive rated officers to learn the broader functions of a wing before moving into a Wg/CC billet. These changes have left the Air Force with a poorly defined and very limited path for growing future leaders.

Senior officer management policies have played a major role in shaping many of the Air Force's current OPD policies. There is a finite amount of time between initial commissioning and mandatory retirement. The more time an officer spends at or below the rank of colonel, the less amount of time he/she can spend in the general officer ranks. The Air Force has elected to emphasize early promotion as a means of addressing this dilemma. By growing a larger pool of BGs who have been promoted several years ahead of their contemporaries, the Air Force has more contenders for the most senior ranks.

Unfortunately, the end result is a system where BPZ promotion becomes the goal of many officers. Without a BPZ promotion, many top-notch officers face a glass ceiling when competing for senior commander billets or promotion beyond the rank of colonel. This has resulted in divisions among the officer corps. Many on-time officers with superb records of performance view themselves as non-players because they have never received an early promotion.

A natural tension has always existed between the need to develop future leaders with sufficient breadth while also ensuring the appropriate depth and recency of operational experience to be a credible commander in a flying organization. In some cases, officers progress through the ranks so fast that they lose the opportunity to develop the appropriate depth of operational experience needed to maintain operational credibility as a commander of a flying organization. This scenario is not in the best interest of the Air Force, the flying organization, or the officer.

While other Services are faced with the same time constraints, they place considerably less emphasis on early promotion and more emphasis on developing and refining operational experience. The composition of their general/flag officer forces represents a balance of on-time and BPZ officers.

Those who are critical of the current process for identifying future leaders tend to point the finger at the officer promotion system. The promotion system, however, is not the problem. Promotion boards and the BPZ promotion process are extremely fair. Only a very small number of officers can be promoted early, but the boards do a great job of identifying some of the best officers for BPZ promotion. The Air Force should continue to use BPZ promotion, along with other quality indicators, as a means for identifying

future leaders. While those promoted early are clearly top-notch officers, BPZ promotion must be kept in perspective—it is a fallacy to assume officers who lack early promotions are of a lower quality.

The recent change in the MRDs for three- and four-star generals/admirals provides an opportunity for the Air Force to review the relative importance of BPZ promotion in developing and growing senior leaders. It is conceivable the Air Force could also move toward a better mix between on-time and BPZ officers in its general officer force. Keep in mind that approximately one-third of the Navy and Army one-star lists are composed of on-time officers.

The recent CY97 CSB revealed a potential reversal from preceding boards—9 percent (11 of 83) of the OG/CC candidates chosen by this board had never received an early promotion.¹ Also, the Air Force policies on BPZ promotion are currently under a senior level review and will be discussed by the Services most senior generals at an upcoming CORONA meeting.²

The author believes senior Air Force leaders now have a unique opportunity to make a mid-course correction. The recent trends may indicate the pendulum has already started to swing back toward the center. In an era of jointness, it is surprising to see such dramatic differences between Air Force OPD/senior officer management policies and those of the other Services when the underlying challenge for all of the Services is the same—to grow tomorrow's leaders in today's environment.

Notes

¹ Col Paul Hankins. Chief, Air Force Colonel Matters Office (AF/DPO). Briefing on "Colonels' Issues." Air War College, 13 November 1997.

² Jordan, Bryant, "Early promotion rules reviewed," *Air Force Times*, 22 December 1997, p. 4.

Appendix A

USAF RATED OFFICER OPINION SURVEY RESULTS

Background and Demographic Information

- Administered to all active duty, rated USAF officers attending Air War College Class of 1998, Air Command and Staff College Class of 1998, and Squadron Officer School Class 98B
- Approximately 80% of eligible officers responded
 - 31 rated AWC students, 139 rated ACSC students, 141 rated SOS students
- Distribution by grade
 - 2 Colonel (selects), 29 Lieutenant Colonels, 108 Majors, and 141 Captains
- Distribution by aeronautical rating
 - Overall
 - 83% were pilots (232 of 280); 21% were navigators (48 of 280)
 - AWC
 - 77% were pilots (24 of 31); 23% were navigators (7 of 31)
 - ACSC
 - 80% were pilots (86 of 108); 20% were navigators (22 of 108)
 - SOS
 - 87% were pilots (122 of 141); 13% were navigators (19 of 141)
- On-time versus early promotees (Field Grade Officers Only)
 - Overall Field Grade
 - 19% have been promoted BPZ (27 of 139); 81% are on-time (112 of 139)
 - AWC
 - 32% have been promoted BPZ (10 of 31); 68% are on-time (21 of 31)
 - ACSC
 - 16% have been promoted BPZ (17 of 108); 84% are on-time (91 of 108)
- Field grade respondents with prior joint duty assignments (JDAs)
 - Overall Field Grade
 - 12% have completed a JDA (16 of 139); 88% have not (123 of 139)
 - AWC
 - 35% have completed a JDA (11 of 31); 65% have not (20 of 31)
 - ACSC
 - 5% have completed a JDA (5 of 108); 95% have not (103 of 108)

Prerequisites for Command

Question: Completion of a squadron commander tour should be a prerequisite for selection to command an operations group.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total:	48% (135/280)	41% (115/280)	4% (11/280)	6% (17/280)	1% (2/280)
Field Gr:	47% (65/139)	38% (53/139)	4% (6/139)	9% (13/139)	1% (2/139)
Comp Gr:	50% (70/141)	44% (62/141)	4% (5/141)	3% (4/141)	0% (0/141)
On-time:	41% (46/112)	42% (47/112)	4% (4/112)	12% (13/112)	2% (2/112)
BPZ:	70% (19/27)	22% (6/27)	7% (2/27)	0% (0/27)	0% (0/27)

Question: Completion of a squadron commander tour should be a prerequisite for selection to command a wing.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total:	57% (160/280)	33% (92/280)	4% (11/280)	5% (14/280)	1% (3/280)
Field Gr:	48% (67/139)	38% (53/139)	4% (6/139)	9% (13/139)	1% (2/139)
Comp Gr:	66% (93/141)	28% (39/141)	4% (6/141)	1% (2/141)	1% (1/141)
On-time:	45% (50/112)	40% (45/112)	4% (4/112)	10% (11/112)	2% (2/112)
BPZ:	63% (17/27)	30% (8/27)	4% (1/27)	4% (1/27)	0% (0/27)

Question: Completion of a tour as an operations group commander should be a prerequisite for selection to command a wing.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total:	29% (81/277)	40% (112/277)	16% (45/277)	14% (38/277)	0% (1/277)
Field Gr:	27% (37/136)	39% (53/136)	16% (22/136)	17% (23/136)	1% (1/136)
Comp Gr:	31% (44/141)	42% (59/141)	16% (23/141)	11% (15/141)	0% (0/141)
On-time:	25% (27/112)	40% (40/112)	17% (19/112)	17% (19/112)	1% (1/112)
BPZ:	38% (10/26)	35% (9/26)	12% (3/26)	15% (4/26)	0% (0/26)

Optimum Tour Lengths for Commanders

Question: The optimum tour length for a squadron commander should be _____.

	12 months	15 months	18 months	24 months
Total:	2% (6/280)	3% (8/280)	32% (89/280)	63% (177/280)
Field Gr:	3% (4/139)	3% (4/139)	31% (43/139)	63% (88/139)
Comp Gr:	1% (2/141)	3% (4/141)	33% (46/141)	63% (89/141)
On-time:	2% (2/112)	3% (3/112)	30% (34/112)	65% (73/112)
BPZ:	7% (2/27)	4% (1/27)	33% (9/27)	56% (15/27)

Question: The optimum tour length for an operations group commander should be _____.

	12 months	15 months	18 months	24 months
Total:	3% (7/280)	5% (15/280)	44% (123/280)	48% (135/280)
Field Gr:	2% (3/139)	6% (8/139)	47% (65/139)	45% (63/139)
Comp Gr:	3% (4/141)	5% (7/141)	41% (58/141)	51% (72/141)
On-time:	2% (2/112)	5% (6/112)	47% (53/112)	46% (51/112)
BPZ:	4% (1/27)	8% (2/27)	44% (12/27)	44% (12/27)

Question: The optimum tour length for a wing commander should be _____.

	12 months	15 months	18 months	24 months
Total:	3% (9/277)	5% (13/277)	36% (99/277)	56% (156/277)
Field Gr:	3% (4/136)	4% (6/136)	36% (49/136)	57% (77/136)
Comp Gr:	4% (5/141)	5% (7/141)	35% (50/141)	56% (79/141)
On-time:	2% (2/112)	5% (5/112)	36% (40/112)	57% (63/112)
BPZ:	8% (2/27)	4% (1/27)	34% (9/27)	54% (14/27)

Relationship between BPZ Promotion and Potential

Question: If an officer has never received a below-the-zone promotion, do you believe he/she can still become a squadron commander?

	Yes	No
Total:	89% (250/280)	11% (30/280)
Field Gr:	86% (119/139)	14% (20/139)
Comp Gr:	93% (131/141)	7% (10/141)
On-time:	84% (94/112)	16% (18/112)
BPZ:	93% (25/27)	7% (2/27)

Question: If an officer has never received a below-the-zone promotion, do you believe he/she can still become an operations group commander?

	Yes	No
Total:	50% (141/280)	50% (139/280)
Field Gr:	44% (61/139)	56% (78/139)
Comp Gr:	57% (80/141)	43% (61/141)
On-time:	41% (46/112)	59% (66/112)
BPZ:	56% (15/27)	44% (12/27)

Question: Which statement best describes the role played by below-the-zone promotion in identification of operations group commander candidates?

- A. An on-time officer still has a chance to be selected as an ops group commander
- B. You are not a viable candidate without a below-the-zone promotion
- C. You are not a viable candidate unless you are at least two years early
- D. You are not a viable candidate unless you are at least three years early
- E. You are not a viable candidate unless you are at least four years early

	A (On-time)	B (Any BPZ)	C (≥ 2 BPZ)	D (≥ 3 BPZ)	E (≥ 4 BPZ)
Total:	39% (107/277)	48% (132/277)	9% (26/277)	4% (11/277)	0% (1/277)
Field Gr:	32% (43/136)	46% (63/136)	14% (19/136)	7% (10/136)	1% (1/136)
Comp Gr:	45% (64/141)	49% (69/141)	5% (7/141)	1% (1/141)	0% (0/141)
On-time:	30% (33/110)	49% (54/110)	15% (17/110)	5% (5/110)	1% (1/110)
BPZ:	38% (10/26)	35% (9/26)	8% (2/26)	19% (5/26)	0% (0/26)

Question: If an officer has never received a below-the-zone promotion, do you believe he/she can still become a vice wing group commander?

	Yes	No
Total:	57% (159/280)	43% (121/280)
Field Gr:	59% (82/139)	41% (57/139)
Comp Gr:	55% (77/141)	45% (64/141)
On-time:	56% (63/112)	44% (49/112)
BPZ:	70% (19/27)	30% (8/27)

Question: If an officer has never received a below-the-zone promotion, do you believe he/she can still become a wing group commander?

	Yes	No
Total:	33% (93/280)	67% (187/280)
Field Gr:	27% (38/139)	73% (101/139)
Comp Gr:	39% (55/141)	61% (86/141)
On-time:	23% (26/112)	77% (86/112)
BPZ:	44% (12/27)	56% (15/27)

Question: Which statement best describes the role played by below-the-zone promotion in identification of wing commander candidates?

- A. An on-time officer still has a chance to be selected as a wing commander
- B. You are not a viable candidate without a below-the-zone promotion
- C. You are not a viable candidate unless you are at least two years early
- D. You are not a viable candidate unless you are at least three years early
- E. You are not a viable candidate unless you are at least four years early

	A (On-time)	B (Any BPZ)	C (≥ 2 BPZ)	D (≥ 3 BPZ)	E (≥ 4 BPZ)
Total:	25% (68/277)	51% (140/277)	16% (43/277)	8% (21/277)	2% (5/277)
Field Gr:	18% (24/136)	50% (68/136)	16% (22/136)	13% (17/136)	4% (5/136)
Comp Gr:	31% (44/141)	51% (72/141)	15% (21/141)	3% (4/141)	0% (0/141)
On-time:	13% (14/110)	55% (60/110)	17% (19/110)	12% (13/110)	4% (4/110)
BPZ:	38% (10/26)	31% (8/26)	12% (3/26)	15% (4/26)	4% (1/26)

Question: If an officer has never received a below-the-zone promotion, do you believe he/she can still achieve the rank of brigadier general?

	Yes	No
Total:	33% (91/280)	67% (189/280)
Field Gr:	27% (38/139)	73% (101/139)
Comp Gr:	38% (53/141)	62% (88/141)
On-time:	24% (27/112)	76% (85/112)
BPZ:	41% (11/27)	59% (16/27)

Operational Credibility

Question: Incumbent flying squadron commanders should be instructor qualified in their unit's primary aircraft.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total:	58% (162/280)	26% (72/280)	4% (12/280)	10% (28/280)	2% (6/280)
Field Gr:	55% (76/139)	31% (43/139)	2% (3/139)	11% (15/139)	1% (2/139)
Comp Gr:	61% (86/141)	21% (29/141)	6% (9/141)	9% (13/141)	3% (4/141)
On-time:	53% (59/112)	31% (35/112)	3% (3/112)	12% (13/112)	2% (2/112)
BPZ:	63% (17/27)	30% (8/27)	0% (0/27)	7% (2/27)	0% (0/27)

Question: Most flying squadron commanders have attained the appropriate depth of operational experience to adequately prepare them to command a flying squadron.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total:	11% (31/280)	60% (168/280)	8% (23/280)	15% (43/280)	5% (15/280)
Field Gr:	10% (14/139)	51% (71/139)	11% (15/139)	19% (26/139)	9% (13/139)
Comp Gr:	12% (17/141)	69% (97/141)	6% (8/141)	12% (17/141)	1% (2/141)
On-time:	11% (12/112)	47% (53/112)	13% (14/112)	20% (22/112)	10% (11/112)
BPZ:	7% (2/27)	67% (18/27)	4% (1/27)	15% (4/27)	7% (2/27)

Question: Most operations group commanders have attained the appropriate depth of operational experience to adequately prepare them to command an operations group.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total:	4% (12/277)	61% (169)	20% (56/277)	13% (35/277)	2% (5/277)
Field Gr:	2% (3/136)	54% (73/136)	22% (30/136)	19% (26/136)	3% (4/136)
Comp Gr:	6% (9/141)	68% (96/141)	18% (26/141)	6% (9/141)	1% (1/141)
On-time:	3% (3/112)	53% (58/112)	24% (26/112)	17% (19/112)	4% (4/112)
BPZ:	0% (0/27)	58% (15/27)	15% (4/27)	27% (7/27)	0% (0/27)

Question: Most wing commanders have attained the appropriate depth of operational experience to adequately prepare them to command a wing.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total:	7% (19/280)	64% (180/280)	19% (53/280)	9% (24/280)	1% (4/280)
Field Gr:	5% (7/139)	61% (85/139)	20% (28/139)	12% (17/139)	1% (2/139)
Comp Gr:	9% (12/141)	67% (95/141)	18% (25/141)	5% (7/141)	1% (2/141)
On-time:	5% (6/112)	60% (67/112)	21% (24/112)	12% (13/112)	2% (2/112)
BPZ:	4% (1/27)	67% (18/27)	15% (4/27)	15% (4/27)	0% (0/27)

Perceived Importance of Quality Indicators

Question: How important of a role do the following factors currently play in identifying future Air Force senior leaders? Rank order each of these factors: (1 – most important; 7 – least important)

Job performance as documented in performance reports; Operational credibility (flight lead, instructor, evaluator, etc.); Completion of a joint assignment; Below-the-zone promotion; Senior service school in-residence; Tour as a squadron commander; and Pentagon assignment

*** - The smaller the total point value, the higher the importance**

<u>Total Results</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Field Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Company Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>
BPZ	575	BPZ	246	BPZ	329
SSS	946	SSS	487	SSS	459
Sq Command	1063	Job Performance	532	Sq Command	506
Job Performance	1075	Joint Tour	548	Job Performance	543
Joint Tour	1193	Sq Command	557	Joint Tour	645
Pentagon Tour	1261	Pentagon Tour	610	Pentagon Tour	651
Ops Credibility	1565	Ops Credibility	793	Ops Credibility	772

<u>On-Time Field Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>BPZ Field Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>
BPZ	197	BPZ	49
SSS	400	SSS	87
Job Performance	429	Job Performance	103
Joint Tour	437	Sq Command	108
Sq Command	449	Joint	111
Pentagon Tour	496	Pentagon Tour	114
Ops Credibility	632	Ops Credibility	161

* -Note: Point values determined by multiplying the number of responses in by the points indicated below:

#1 responses X 1 points	#5 responses X 5 points
#2 responses X 2 points	#6 responses X 6 points
#3 responses X 3 points	#7 responses X 7 point
#4 responses X 4 points	

Desired Importance of Quality Indicators

Question: Based on your personal opinion, how important of a role should each of the following factors play in identifying future Air Force senior leaders? Rank order each of these factors: (1 – most important; 7 – least important)

Job performance as documented in performance reports; Operational credibility (flight lead, instructor, evaluator, etc.); Completion of a joint assignment; Below-the-zone promotion; Senior service school in-residence; Tour as a squadron commander; and Pentagon assignment

* - The smaller the total point value, the higher the importance

<u>Total Results</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Field Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Company Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>
Job Performance	519	Job Performance	223	Job Performance	296
Ops Credibility	612	Ops Credibility	334	Ops Credibility	278
Sq Command	778	Sq Command	395	Sq Command	383
SSS	1267	SSS	602	SSS	665
Joint Tour	1353	Joint Tour	651	Joint Tour	702
Pentagon Tour	1575	Pentagon Tour	742	BPZ	767
BPZ	1578	BPZ	811	Pentagon Tour	839

<u>On-Time Field Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>BPZ Field Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>
Job Performance	175	Job Performance	48
Ops Credibility	266	Ops Credibility	68
Sq Command	319	Sq Command	76
SSS	490	SSS	112
Joint Tour	524	Joint Tour	127
Pentagon Tour	608	Pentagon Tour	134
BPZ	664	BPZ	147

* -Note: Point values determined by multiplying the number of responses in by the points indicated below:

#1 responses X 1 points	#5 responses X 5 points
#2 responses X 2 points	#6 responses X 6 points
#3 responses X 3 points	#7 responses X 7 point
#4 responses X 4 points	

Glossary

ACIP	Aviation Career Incentive Pay
ACP	Aviation Continuation Pay
ACSC	Air Command and Staff College
AF/DPO	Air Force Colonel Matters Office
AFMPC	Air Force Military Personnel Center (now AFPC)
AFPAM	Air Force Pamphlet
AFPC	Air Force Personnel Center (previously AFMPC)
AFR	Air Force Regulation
APZ	Above the Promotion Zone
AWC	Air War College
BG	Brigadier General
BPZ	Below the Promotion Zone
CONUS	Continental United States
COS	Critical Occupational Specialty
CSAF	Chief of Staff of the Air Force
CSB	Command Screening Board
CY	Calendar Year
DA Pam	Department of the Army Pamphlet
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDD	Department of Defense Directive
DOPMA	Defense Officer Personnel Management Act
IPZ	In the Promotion Zone
ISS	Intermediate Service School
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JDA	Joint Duty Assignment
JDAL	Joint Duty Assignment List
JPME	Joint Professional Military Education
JSO	Joint Specialty Officer
MACOM	Major Command (Army)
MAJCOM	Major Command (USAF)
MRD	Mandatory Retirement Date
NAF	Numbered Air Force
O-4	Major/Lieutenant Commander
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel/Commander
O-6	Colonel/Captain
O-7	Brigadier General/Rear Admiral (Lower Half)
O-8	Major General/Rear Admiral (Upper Half)
O-9	Lieutenant General/Vice Admiral

O-10	General/Admiral
OAS	Officer Assignment System
OVAS	Officer Volunteer Assignment System
OG	Operations Group
OG/CC	Operations Group Commander
OPD	Officer Professional Development
PERSCOM	US Total Army Personnel Command
PME	Professional Military Education
S-3	Battalion Operations and Training Officer
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SOS	Squadron Officer School
SSS	Senior Service School
TAFCS	Total Active Federal Commissioned Service
TIG	Time in Grade
TIS	Time in Service
UNT	Undergraduate Navigator Training
UPT	Undergraduate Pilot Training
USAF	United States Air Force
USC Title X	United States Code, Title 10
US	United States
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
Wg/CC	Wing Commander
Wg/CV	Vice Wing Commander
Wg/DCM	Wing Deputy Commander for Maintenance
Wg/DO	Wing Deputy Commander for Operations
Wg/RM	Wing Deputy Commander for Resource Management
XO	Battalion Executive Officer

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